

**REINTERPRETING PATTERN  
AND DECORATION IN  
CONTEMPORARY PAINTING**

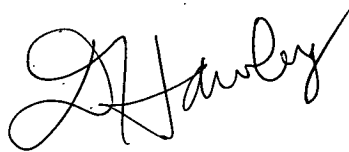
By  
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Submitted in the fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Art (Research)

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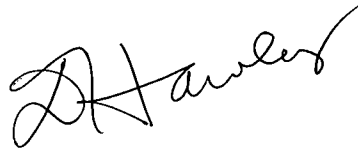
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## **Abstract**

This project presents pattern and decoration as a strategy for the continuation of painting well beyond modernism. Of particular concern is painting's ongoing obsession with pictorial space and how, given its own medium specific limitations, it is able to present or represent the world. Consequently it assumes that the 'death of painting' characterized only the end of one particular narrative.

In the paintings, lines and shapes are arranged into a motif by a process similar to cell division or biformation. The motif is repeated in many ways, occasionally creating kaleidoscopic spatial sensations; it often appears in the centre of compositions. The repetition and representation of this motif in each painting is also reiterated in the use of serialization, as individual paintings become part of a larger relational macro structure. These operations are reflective of pattern and decoration. Formalist strategy is essential, as scale, paint application and centrality present pattern and decoration in ways not usually associated specifically within the medium of painting. The works do not sit comfortably as paintings alone; instead they display qualities characteristic of printmaking or even sculpture.

The project alludes to more than painting about painting, even though the internal dialogues of painting are evident. It presents pattern and decoration as open signifiers. It does not subscribe to the exclusive modernist ideology concerning a work of art's autonomy, as the works refer to more than their own internal operations and engage also with external phenomena. In this project, painting's exchange with modernism is not one of irony, or subversion, as was the case with other more recent conceptual modes of painting. Instead, it is indicative of a resurgent interest in approaches to painting that emphasize the sensory and retinal whilst also echoing manifestations of formalist possibilities.



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## CHAPTER ONE: CENTRAL ARGUMENT

### INTRODUCTION

Abstract painters for most of last century feared pattern and decoration. Evidence of it (either stylistically or theoretically) threatened all that painting was proclaimed to achieve. Decoration particularly provoked a position that seemed at the time to be contrary to Abstract painting's direction. It had associations with qualities that were contradictory to the modernist project; it was believed to be superficial, impure and empty<sup>1</sup>. If these associations still stand then how does one explain the appearance of pattern and decoration in so much recent abstract painting? Where did it go during the modernist period? Is it now considered an acceptable stylistic quality with broader conceptual and metaphorical signification? And importantly, if many abstract painters now use it, is this a case for reconsidering or reinterpreting the role of pattern and decoration in contemporary painting as something other than superficial?

To speak generally about pattern and decoration is itself descriptive of the appearance of an artwork's stylistic attributes. It is through style however, that painting exists in abundance. Style facilitates 'unique' interpretation<sup>2</sup>. This is evident in the endurance of painting's categories; still life, portraiture, landscape and more recently abstraction. This project presents a style, or method, as a mode for abstract painting's continuation; therefore it is formalist in

<sup>1</sup> Andrew, McNamara, *Ornamentalism*, exhibition catalogue, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1997, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> I have long been entertained by Baudrillard's notion of simulacra, but never entirely convinced by its tendency to prolong works of art which present imagery that simply 'replicates' the everyday. I consider originality or uniqueness as maintaining some significance in the visual arts with regard to the presentation, interpretation or evolution of a subject. I do not however, dismiss the dialogue of the readymade, but rather wish to confess a lack of intrigue with much recent art which interprets a subject by re-presenting it using materials not found in its original makeup. There is no requirement for the *visual* interpretation of form in this work, as it is often purely metaphorical. It claims to exist in a post-aesthetic, or post-painting condition, positioning itself at the peak of the art hierarchy. Ironically it promotes itself by the same logic of exclusion which instigated painting's endgame. The work in this project is created through the 'evolution' of form which is not appropriated. Its potential to function as a sign, therefore, is much more ambiguous, and probably secondary to the internal processes which influence its making.

emphasis. The work is motivated by the appearance of 'things,' and how they are conceived and perceived as relational to what has gone before and what is to be anticipated.

In the work, pattern and decoration are manifested as stylistic characteristics. They produce visual effects akin to perceptual abstraction. These effects achieve unusual spatial sensations and realize particular visual structures. The works are experiential, but not meaningless, participating in numerous dialogues that reveal logic (or reasoning) behind their making, relationships to past art, and references to organisational systems. The discussion in this central argument reveals some of the associations within the dialogue of painting inherent to pattern and decoration. These associations and their consequences were influential throughout the making of the work and are crucial to its function.

Painting's ability to 'continue' beyond modernism in ways which were not ironic or purely reactionary was pursued. Some analysis of painting's condition in relation to its 'endgame' influenced the utilisation of particular strategies. Ideology during the 1950s concerning painting and the 'problem' of illusion was a starting point. The project does not attempt to ridicule developments in painting at this time, but instead investigates findings that result from a re-interpretation of particular rules.

The central argument identifies some of these rules and states positions which were considered, and employed throughout the project. Interacting with painting's dialogues helped shape the work, but the visual sensations which are evident may be perceived as something altogether separate. By revealing points of interest and inspiration within the dialogues of painting I intend to demonstrate, in some cases, how pattern and decoration fit into the history of recent painting, even during periods when it was 'excommunicated.' The paintings made during the course of this project are the result of this interaction. They do not merely repeat what has gone before, but rather seek to provide material, through engaging with past art, that could be considered as additional to the body of knowledge which is painting. Reinterpreting pattern and decoration therefore is crucial to understanding the submission.

## CENTRAL ARGUMENT

### **Reinterpreting Pattern and Decoration in Contemporary Painting. Is it a logical consequence of abstraction?**

The words *pattern* and *decoration* require some terminological clarification, as they are easily perceived as synonymous. Dictionary definitions often associate both with mimicry, craft and prettiness<sup>3</sup>. For this project however, the two are distinguishable as plural and singular, for instance pattern refers to repetition and hence many, whilst decoration may only refer to one motif and its internal operations.

Andrew McNamara provided some insights into the interpretation of decoration in a catalogue for the exhibition titled *Ornamentalism* (1997)<sup>4</sup>. He emphasized the potential for decoration to be confused with ornament, citing their differences but identifying a tendency for the two to be synonymous in 'modernist debates about art'. My project adheres to this logic, as differentiation between the terms decoration and ornament (and pattern) is not essential. Each term embodied qualities considered undesirable during most of the modernist period. However it should be noted through the course of this discussion that, in particular exhibitions and texts, the word ornament sometimes appears to function as a 'substitute' for decoration. It is occasionally positioned as independent to the 'stigma' associated with decoration and hence, is a more sustainable title.<sup>5</sup>

The semantic merging of decoration and ornament during modernist dialogues may also be indicative of a general disregard for the exactness of the term. For example as Robyn Daw explains

*I would suggest that a disintegration of meaning has occurred resulting from a century of modernist thought having cleansed the words of any prior complexity or association beyond excess and superficiality to essential form. The definitions we have today have been created*

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Funk, *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, New York, 1963.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew McNamara, op.cit. 1997, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> This assumption is especially applicable to the exhibitions *Ornament and Abstraction*, 2001, *Ornamentalism*, 1997, and in the book *Ornamentalism, the New Decorativeness in Architecture and Design* by Robert Jensen and Patricia Conway, 1982, Clarkson N. Potter Inc. These are discussed in chapter two.

*through the filter of modernist discourse. Before ornament and decoration became superfluous to form, and subsequently denigrated by modernist discourse, perhaps a meaning existed that distinguished the two to a greater degree?*<sup>6</sup>

Language evolves and changes, and I do not propose to embark on a detailed investigation into terminological semantics, but rather to re-emphasize the alternating status of pattern and decoration within discourses about abstract painting.

The stance in opposition to anything associated with decoration in modernist discourse has been well documented<sup>7</sup>. For this project then, I will try to offer some additional points, in order to establish a foundation for reinterpretation, or at least reconsideration in relation to painting. These points will also be integrated into discussion concerning a recognition of pattern and decoration in my submission, and their potential to progress discourses both in and external to abstract painting.

It was the realisation of painting's decorative potential through processes which opened up new dialogues, and alternative inclusive methods for painting to seem to continue beyond modernism. Decoration was in fact there

<sup>6</sup> Robyn Daw, *Hors-D'Oeuvres: Ornamental-Decoration and Gender*, MFA Thesis, Tasmanian School of Art, 1999, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Robyn Daw's thesis deserves acknowledgement here as it explores in some detail the modernist position towards decoration. In summary Daw emphasizes what she calls the form/decoration dichotomy, i.e. decoration being perceived as trivial, existing only as surface entertainment whilst form revealed internalized truth or authentic experience. She sites examples of modernist discourse to support this, with particular reference to Adolf Loos' essay *Ornament and Crime*, 1903. Daw's intention however is to expose particular cultural/historical constructs in relation to this subject concerning issues more relational to gender politics.

This subject has also been well documented in a number of exhibition catalogues, for example the aforementioned *Ornamentalism*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1997, plus *Death and Decoration*, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, 2000, *Post-Hypnotic*, University Galleries, Illinois State University, Illinois, 1999, *Good Vibrations*, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne, 2002, and *Ornament and Abstraction*, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, 2001. The acknowledgement of this condition is an important factor in my central argument, however I do not offer too much background detail out of regard for what is already written about it. It is my intention rather to attempt to place pattern and decoration into a type of suggestive logical continuum of abstract painting. This continuum should be perceived as one of many, rather than belonging to any one dominant mode.

all along, even in the writing of Clement Greenberg and the artists he championed. Donald Kuspit, in his book titled *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic* (1979) devoted an entire chapter to the decorative in Greenberg's writing. In it he not only exposed contradictions in the modernist form/decoration dichotomy, but also identified a revealing correlation between decoration and formalism.<sup>8</sup>

Kuspit also provided numerous examples of Greenberg's anti-decorative position during this period by quoting statements such as *...In a sense, decoration teaches one to lie about oneself and about one's life, and to falsify one's experience in general*<sup>9</sup> and *...The decorative represents all that does not breathe, that is inert in advanced painting.*<sup>10</sup> He made it plain that Greenberg (during this particular period) was a major supporter of the form/decoration dichotomy in modernism. However it was his case for a correlation between formalism and decoration that has larger consequences for the proposition in this project.

Let us examine an influential piece of modernist ideology - the recognition of an artwork's autonomy - and see how Kuspit uses this to present his position. He explains that if a painting has no relationship to the external world, i.e. if it is autonomous, then there is no tension between illusion and surface as there is only surface with no representation.

*In a sense this is what it means to be decorative: it is free of any representational purpose, and is strictly presentational... Fully decorative the picture can never ever hint at an illusionistic purpose, for it seems too obviously what it is in itself, too obviously one with the conditions of its own creation. And these are all conditioned to be true to the medium; the need to be true to the medium comes to replace the need to be true to nature. In the decorative picture, painting per se and the pictorial are inseparable. For Greenberg, the most autonomous, abstract, and modernist picture is the decorative picture.*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Donald Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic*, University of Wisconsin Press, U.S.A, 1979.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 59. In this chapter Kuspit presents a very convincing series of observations, derived from Greenberg's own writings. He actually implies that much of the logic Greenberg employed relied on strategy, or visual characteristics very similar to decoration. This is particularly pertinent with regard to the 'all-over composition', utilized most notably by Jackson Pollock, and its correlation with wallpaper.

If a painting is to be truly autonomous, an object in itself, what significance does it actually have? Is this not an impossible condition as one cannot completely deny referentiality? Even the 'blankest' monochrome is not devoid of external referents in nature or culture, therefore being unrelational to anything literal could only be described as decorative (not in a derogatory sense).

*That art aspires to autonomy does not mean that it unconditionally purges itself of ornamental elements, the very existence of art, judged by the criteria of the practical is ornamental.*<sup>12</sup>

The notion of autonomy in modernist painting contributed to its 'endgame.' The defining of painting by establishing what it was not, or the reductive model, was inherently terminal as this particular narrative devised absolutes which were not inclusive but exclusive. Painting simply had nowhere else to go because its own self-defining system excluded everything, consequently it folded in on itself.<sup>13</sup>

This issue provokes a point that is central to a contemporary reinterpretation of pattern and decoration. With the breakdown of the discourse of autonomy, decoration takes on expansive referential possibilities; structures become open signifiers. Indeed for the contemporary painter, pattern and decoration offer more than just mere surface entertainment and meaningless retinal stimulation. It is instead a logical consequence of abstraction, a system that '*possesses its own referentiality and its own kind of content to set alongside such classic methods of conveying meanings as allegory or symbol.*'<sup>14</sup>

More to the point however, is the position of pattern and decoration in relation to formalism. By suggesting a reinterpretation am I also suggesting a re-evaluation of formalist principles? Maybe so, as pattern and decoration are of course terms descriptive of formal operations with relation both to strategy and appearance. Andrew Benjamin's discussion concerning painting's 'discontinuity' is relevant at this point, as his model for the progression of painting appears to emphasise technique, as does formalism. This position is in contrast to the more

<sup>12</sup> This is from T.W. Adorno, as quoted by Andrew McNamara in *Ornamentalism* exhibition catalogue (1997), Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art; Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> Marcus Bruderlin, *Ornament and Abstraction*, Yale University Press, London, 2001, p. 19.



conceptually driven movements in abstract painting in the mid to late 1980s like Neo Geo whose adherence to Baudrillard's simulationism<sup>15</sup> seemed to propose a continuation of painting that emphasised conceptual possibilities as being somehow prevalent over matters concerned with technique.

Benjamin describes a condition he refers to as 'abstraction's repetition.' He explains that to be a contemporary painter one must not simply continue repeating what has gone before, but rather seek ways to extend, or add to the dialogue.

*In other words, instead of viewing each abstract painting as a unique and self-enclosed work, the work of pure interiority, there must be an allowance for the possibility that part of the work, and part of its own work as work, will be a staged encounter with earlier determinations and thus forms of abstraction.*<sup>16</sup>

This 'staged encounter' may be evident in modernism's reactionary capacity, however Benjamin is attempting to describe something different, a process similar to deconstruction without appropriating, emphasising a more reverential technical dialogue, rather than one of irony or displacement (maybe this is 'construction' instead). The challenge being to find methods of continuing that are not repetitious, or simply reactionary, but instead offer the potential for extension, and in the case of modernist abstract painting, a respectful interaction with its traditions.

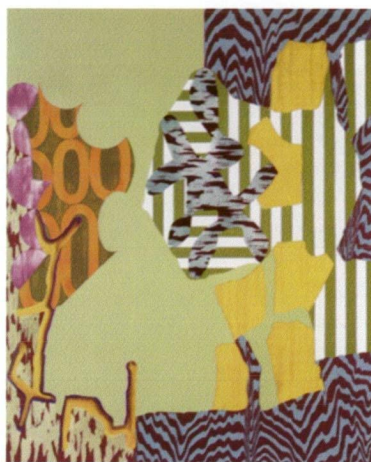
Benjamin emphasises Greenberg's model for self-criticism as a strategy for the progression of painting as it '*has the capacity to save art from becoming either decorative or therapy.*'<sup>17</sup> Self-criticism, quite possibly the most difficult of artistic endeavours, inevitably requires a reappraisal or questioning of one's absolutes. This logic is similar to the aforementioned discussion concerning painting's autonomy. Again a reinterpretation of decoration in this context, as something of substance and signification, would challenge absolutes and open possibilities for continuity. Therefore as Benjamin states, it is possible for painting to progress through its own 'discontinuity.'

<sup>15</sup> See Peter Halley *Collected Essays 1981-87*, 1988, Lapis Press, Venice, CA.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Benjamin, *What is Abstraction*, Academy Editions, London, 1996, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 14-15.

Benjamin cites a number of ways in which the work of painting, or the 'works work' can progress painting. As mentioned previously, his examples emphasise technique, as he identifies strategies which particular artists such as Jonathan Lasker, David Reed, Lydia Dona and Shirley Kaneda employ in their paintings. He gives these strategies titles like the *'affirmation of the worked surface, installed paintings, disrupted grids, and displaced paint.'*<sup>18</sup> In my submission I attempt to engage in painting's continuity by utilising unusual methods of paint application and grid representation and hence I empathise with this model.



1. Shirley Kaneda *The Assurance of Doubt* 1995

Paint application, or mark making, is an acknowledgment of the tactile properties of paint; of paint as paint. This, alongside flatness, is a medium specific characteristic most notably emphasised by Greenberg in order to 'elevate' painting by highlighting properties exclusive to itself. Andrew Benjamin also identified an interesting link between exclusivity and purity when he stated:

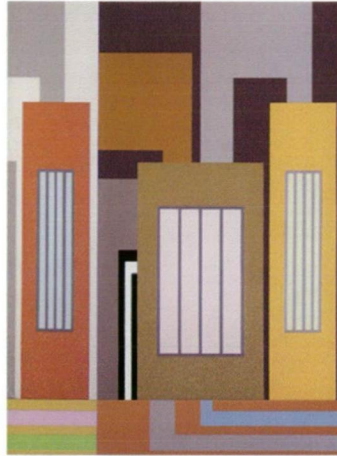
*It emerges as a sign of modernity that each art will be able to present the 'effects exclusive to itself.' And it is here that 'purity' emerges; purity is inextricably linked to exclusivity.*<sup>19</sup>

Benjamin pointed to a transformation of what European abstractionists such as Malevich and Kandinsky refer to as a linking of purity to transcendentalism. He stated that Greenberg dissolved this association by interpreting purity as a referent to formalist elements in a work, most notably exclusivity.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew Benjamin, op.cit. 1996, p. 15.

The dissolving of transcendental signifiers is suggestive of another re-interpretation of geometry as was expressed by Peter Halley in his article *The Crisis in Geometry*.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, whilst both Greenberg and Halley promote a reinterpretation their positions, it should be noted, are in opposition as Halley's argument is founded upon geometry as sign or referent rather than Greenberg's exclusive autonomous art object which refers only to its own inner workings.



2. Peter Halley *Superbundle* 2000

Despite Halley's attempts to distance himself from formalism there are correlations between it and elements in his painting.

Another issue is also the explanatory nature of his writing in relation to his painting. His painting presents itself as representational, by its diagrammatical and even figurative linkage to the text.<sup>21</sup> It appears over-simplified as his work, especially more recently, is evident of much more than an attempt to represent cyberspace by painting cells and conduits. What actually seems more pertinent in Halley's work now is in fact its decorative or formal attributes evident in the subtle permutation of surface and the often hierarchal use of line, shape and colour. Conducive to this

<sup>20</sup> Peter Halley, op.cit. 1988, p. 75. In this article Halley debunks spiritual associations with geometry, as seen in early modernist abstract painting. He proposes different associations/signifiers for geometry that are more relational to the constructed world in which we live (Foucault's *The Order of Things* and Baudrillard's notion of 'simulacra' formulate the theoretical basis for Halley's argument). He also discredits formalism's autonomy.

<sup>21</sup> This is evident in his descriptive titles, such as *Prison with Underground Conduit*, 1985. The titles for his recent show at Waddington Galleries, London, 2001, are sometimes much more subjective and are more descriptive of functions or states.

point is also Alex Coles' likening of Halley to the master of decoration, Matisse, in a recent catalogue essay.<sup>22</sup>

What Halley in fact provides in his writing is a model for reinterpretation, and like Greenberg, a move away from one association or signifier (transcendentalism) towards another (technology). During modernism transcendental associations with geometry were also associated with form, as form alone was indicative of all that was considered to be wholesome in painting at the time. One recalls once again, the form/decoration dichotomy. Without re-interpretations, or in this case the breakdown of geometry as a transcendental signifier, pattern and decoration would still occupy contested territory.

The 'continuation' of painting however, is not that straightforward, and the proliferation of abstract painting during the last twenty years is very complex, as the dominant mode has been broken down into numerous regional dialects.

*The formalist view of art as a series of historically necessary developmental sequences was more than discredited; insofar as it had functioned as a kind of cover story for the claim of superiority of Western culture and the centrality of its history within the whole, that view of art came to seem not merely misguided but positively harmful...*<sup>23</sup>

With the dissolution of modernist hegemony, painting gained a degree of freedom through a loss of responsibility. Its inclusive potential was, and is, reflective of a pluralist condition evident in contemporary art today.

*... there are countless directions for artmaking to take, none more privileged, historically at least, than the rest... That painting was no longer the 'key' did not mean that something else had to take over from it... It was as if a great river had now resolved itself into a network of tributaries.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See 'Dazzling Mailboxes: Peter Halley's New Paintings' in the exhibition catalogue *Peter Halley: Paintings*, Waddington Galleries, London, 2001. Cole credits Halley with devising a synthesis of conceptualism - Duchamp, and painterly tradition - Matisse.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas McEvilley, *The Exiles Return: Towards a Redefinition of Painting in the Post-Modern Era*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur C. Danto, op.cit. 1997, p. 136.

To deny the existence of qualities such as pattern and decoration seems contradictory to what painting is essentially about.

Pattern and decoration may also indeed be symptomatic of painting's newly found freedom. A freedom to explore the purely visual, or to indulge in style and technique as interpretive spatial constructs; that is to suggest a continuation of what could be described as painting's somewhat 'ambivalent' relationship with formalism.

*After thirty years, the affiliation with formalism is once again acceptable, given its disassociation from Greenberg's valorization of opticality and quality... the... return to formalism in the late 1990's is arguably a reaction against the emphasis on theory and the illustrative narratives of conceptually based art.*<sup>25</sup>

Pattern and decoration are both a logical continuation of modernism and the realization of painting's decorative potential indicative of a position after modernism. The acknowledgment that decoration has the potential to signify is contradictory to the modernist project. A characteristic pertinent to contemporary formalism is its elevated acknowledgement of content and the potential for paintings to present open signifiers. This should be recognized as a point of departure from previous modes of formalism.

I am proposing a more expansive viewpoint than that which has traditionally been associated with the decorative. In recent painting and, possibly, art making in general, this word has diversified its associations. Most, if not all object based artworks could be perceived as functioning similarly to the decorative as they all, to some degree, involve the arrangement of the basic elements of design in order to be realized. Only post-object art is capable of escaping this condition, however as T.W. Adorno stated '...the absolute rejection of style becomes style...'<sup>26</sup> Maybe negativity shouldered by the decorative is also evident in distinguishing between the two terms 'decorative' and 'decoration.' If an artwork is perceived as being decorative one should differentiate this quality from its potential to function solely as a decoration. In recent painting the word seems far more 'acceptable' as an adjective rather than a noun.

<sup>25</sup> Frances Colpitt, *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 192.

<sup>26</sup> This is from T.W. Adorno, as quoted by Andrew McNamara in the *Ornamentalism* exhibition catalogue, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1997, p. 13.

The work in my submission presents patterned decorations as open referents. But to what do they refer, and do they also function in other additional ways? This process, namely engaging with the work, is multifaceted. The paintings I have made operate in multiple realms of interpretation and interaction. Their optical content and physicality evokes the experiential, whilst their rigid and determined organizational 'arrangements' penetrate through surface concerns and offer associations of much deeper consequence. Patterns sometime appear without end, seeming to continue rhythmically beyond the boundaries of the picture's edges. Uncontained sequences are evident. The paintings become diagrams illustrating how we realize ourselves as part of an infinite system of relationships, and what it is like to experience this realization.



## CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT

### INTRODUCTION

My inquiry starts in the studio and as a consequence I am motivated to research and analyze other artists work. This context will be discussed in two parts; firstly in the work of individual artists, and secondly exhibitions which, as a curatorial premise, have sought to contribute to the contemporary pattern and decoration phenomenon. In part two, I will also make reference to the Pattern and Decoration 'movement' which occurred in the U.S.A during the late 1970s.

In part one, I will discuss specific works and exhibitions by four artists. Robert Hunter's paintings became significant for their use of pattern and serialization. He also ignited an interest in composition as a presentation of constant structure and how this could function as an absolute, or as a stabilizing entity, by re-painting variations of the same motif. Frank Stella provides a model for painting's internal discourse and continuity beyond its endgame in the form of pattern and decoration. Philip Taaffe repositions the familiar in ways that reveal multiple discourses that are both internal and external to painting. He uses pattern and decoration to transform without deconstruction or irony. Jonathan Lasker constructs highly stylized paintings which question the idea of abstraction's autonomy through the presence of a 'figure' and 'ground' relationship. His work challenges conventional notions of spontaneity in painting, whilst also presenting ambiguous imagery (like Taaffe) which functions metaphorically.

In part two, I will describe some influential points arising from four exhibitions. *Ornamentalism* is evidence of the incorporation of pattern and decoration into mainstream contemporary art practice. This exhibition will be discussed in relation to 1970s pattern and decoration. *Ornament and Abstraction* provides a substantial case for the presence of ornament through the entire history of art, even in modernism. It describes a more inclusive approach to art practices incorporating those made by non-western cultures and those associated with previously maligned art forms such as art nouveau. Ornament as a logical source for the continuation of abstraction is also proposed in this exhibition. *Post-Hypnotic* suggests a revived interest in modes of painting which emphasize sensory and experiential qualities, and finally *Abstract Painting Once Removed* displays a renewed enthusiasm for painting by a younger generation of artists and critics.

## PART ONE: ARTISTS

In April 2002, I saw an exhibition of new paintings by Robert Hunter.<sup>27</sup> This exhibition revealed many similarities with the concerns in my own painting. It offered a wider context for my research proposition in Australian art and instigated a curiosity about abstract painting's existence in Australia and its 'position' in the national art scene.

In earlier developmental stages of my art training abstraction did not flow easily. It had to be 'taught' and I had to 'unlearn' other methods previously acquired in order to make way for the alternative vision it demanded. I had to 'learn to look.' In Australia, abstract art has a tenuous history. It was for some time perceived as foreign and has lacked the political dimension which made it significant during its high points in other parts of the world.<sup>28</sup> I was five months old when *The Field* (1968) exhibition opened at The National Gallery of Victoria. The catalogue has, as one would expect, dated a little, and many of the artists in the show have not remained faithful to the direction expressed in the essays, or even as evident in their works.<sup>29</sup> I have always associated *The Field* with a recognition of Australia's connection to the international art world and Robert Hunter's association with the minimalist sculptor Carl Andre, in 1971, is consistent with this assumption.<sup>30</sup>

The context for this project is mostly evident in ideology and artworks produced by other artists overseas, therefore I have not seen many of the works in the flesh, relying instead on essays and reproductions in catalogues. Robert Hunter, however, is an exception and therefore I feel compelled to describe my experience viewing his exhibition in some detail.

Upon entering Hunter's exhibition I was confronted by whiteness, or as Hunter intended it to be perceived, nothingness. The gallery is a large rectangular, white walled space with polished concrete floors, or in

<sup>27</sup> At Anna Schwartz Gallery in Melbourne.

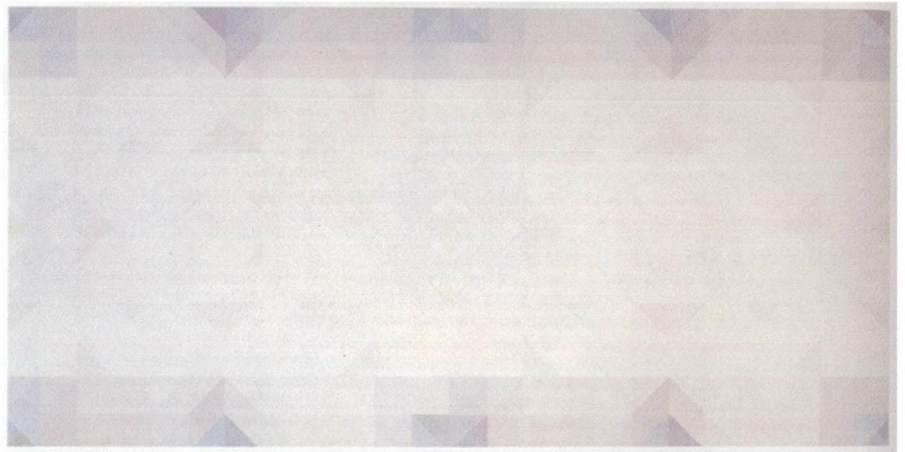
<sup>28</sup> See Carolyn Barnes' essay 'Abstraction and the Australian Context,' in Victoria Lynn, *Australian Perspectives*, 1993, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

<sup>29</sup> Charles Green, *Robert Hunter, Artist in Residence 1988/89 The University of Melbourne*, exhibition catalogue, 1989, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> Jenepher Duncan *Robert Hunter Paintings 1966-1988*, exhibition catalogue, Monash University Gallery, 1989, p. 10.



appearance a standard 'white cube' (albeit rectangular). Evenly spaced at conventional hanging height around each wall were Hunter's latest paintings. Each work is so white, and the light so evenly manipulated that certain parts of the works appear to dissipate or recede into the gallery walls. They invite close inspection, and even contain tiny coloured motifs, which are heavily tinted as to become noticeable only at an intimate distance. I suspect these qualities are not new for Hunter, but rather what does appear to be a surprising development is a more dramatic tonal shift within the works as compared to earlier works. For example, many display an expanse, as tones towards the centre dissipate into white whilst remaining shaded at the periphery. In the past, most of Hunter's works have depicted a tonal equilibrium, or 'equivalence'<sup>31</sup> to the other elements within the work. Whilst this new series retains his trademark horizontal/vertical/diagonal symmetrical composition, the peripheral placement of darker shades creates a compositional dissipation at the centre. Geometrical structure is still present, and can be seen at a very shallow viewing distance, but as the viewer moves back and forth in the gallery space this geometry appears and disappears. Or rather what in one instance appears to be something dissolves into nothing and vice versa.

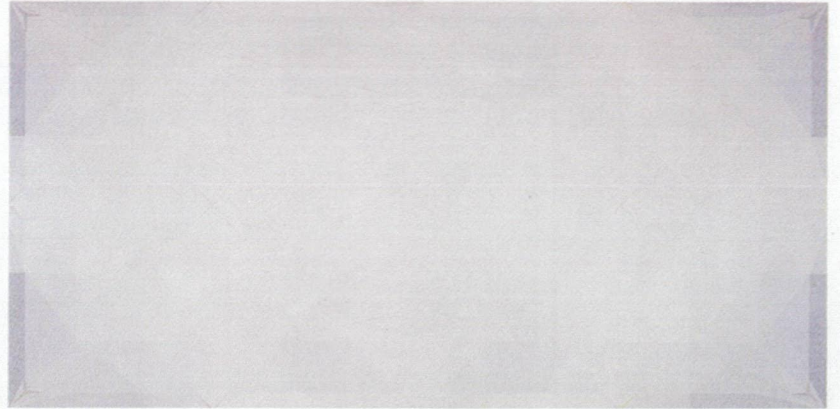


3. Robert Hunter *Untitled #4* 1990

It is also at this point that painting dissolves into the literal space inhabited by sculpture. This is evident because all the elements traditionally associated with painting are deleted, and what remains is subtle surface permutation similar to a delicate embossing or even a quality reminiscent of a Ben Nicholson relief. Surface is a quality worth noting in Hunter's work. He has abandoned the brush in favour of a roller in pursuit of a more 'mechanistic' aesthetic. A

<sup>31</sup> Gary Catalano, 'Something out of nothing, an interview with Robert Hunter,' *Art and Australia*, vol.33, Summer 1995, p. 202.

surface akin to the use of an airbrush is present in some instances. Hunter stoically maintained a cool surface in his work throughout the 1980s when the painterly aesthetic was widespread.



4. Robert Hunter *Untitled* (#2) 2001

Process has always been important to Hunter, and it is precisely the ‘concrete’ process of pure abstraction, or the notion of the making of something from nothing (non-objective abstraction) that is of emphasis in this show. In the past, process for Hunter has been about establishing rules, which in turn become ‘absolutes’ that usually conform to reductive painting strategies. His paintings begin with a very ‘*rational logical basis but where they end up is something else.*’<sup>32</sup>

Hunter has only written one artist’s statement and rarely gives interviews, his last in 1995 with Gary Catalano, was published in the summer edition of *Art and Australia*. In it he revealed some of the rules used to begin his first monochromatic paintings. For example they were ‘*5 feet square, contained only 2 colours and dealt with equivalence.*’<sup>33</sup> Indeed all artists, especially painters, establish rules that enable them to shape the parts of their work that make it particular to each individual. However, for painters like Hunter, and even myself, it is precisely this process of rule making which facilitates an intellectual or pseudo-mathematical space that becomes one of the layers of content within the work.

Hunter’s new works also presented several interesting points with regard to serialisation. The most applicable of these being that each work appeared to present tonal variations of the same composition. A painting’s

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 204.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 202.



individuality is confirmed only by Hunter's own decision making process, i.e. *Untitled No.2* (2001) is differentiated from the remaining works by its particular tonal permutations; at close inspection its composition, or under structure, is the same as the others. Composition for this series is absolute and Hunter is offering his interpretation of it by selecting other elements to emphasise, namely tonal variations with subtle colour and surface fluctuations. Painting therefore emphasises selectivity; a process that the viewer can also participate in as many of Hunter's decisions are left open to multiple interpretations and possibilities.

Hunter's interest in minimalism, and consequently reductionism reveals a connection to Frank Stella's monochromatic stripe paintings of the late 1950s. A progressive summary of Stella's painting through the 1960s and 70s indicates a move away from reductionism towards a more inclusive method. This is evident in the variety of contrasting patterns he employs in, for example, his *Exotic Birds* series, completed during the mid to late 1970s. Over a thirty-year period, Hunter's work appears to become more inclusive and consequently more patterned, but a reductionist residue still persists as is evident in his previously mentioned compositional absolutes.



5. Frank Stella *Steller's Albatross* 5x 1976

It is Stella, rather, who provides a more radical example of painting's 'continuation' as he incorporates visual elements in his work during the mid 1970s that are akin to baroque decorations. Also, his work around this time begins to include motifs obtained from the external world. This is evident in titles like the *Polish Village* series, the *Brazilian* series, and the *Exotic Birds*. In contrast, Robert Hunter's imagery does not so readily divulge connections with phenomena external to the inner workings of the painting.

His works (despite the occasional likeness to the enamel surface of a fridge) remain stoically 'pure.'

There are many interesting points of comparison and contrast between Hunter and Stella. Serialisation in particular is an entrenched strategy for both artists. However, it is the differences that offer examples of a discourse about the absolutes (or rules) which artists subscribe to their practice; each of these is part of a complex system governing both form and content in the work. At a time when painting was considered to be in crisis, it is Stella's dialogue with illusionism and his incorporation of external referents, which is a significant point of emphasis for the logic of continuation as expressed in the central argument.

Stella's discourse with illusionism and autonomy is also a point of importance for Rainald Franz in the catalogue for the exhibition *Ornament and Abstraction*. Franz heralds Stella as igniting a re-emergence of the ornamental in modern art. He draws comparisons between Stella's stripe paintings of the 1950s and ornamental etchings of the fifteenth century.<sup>34</sup> He also sites similarities between Stella's wall reliefs and the

*...trajectory of ornamental art from the scrollwork of the sixteenth century to the 'Style Rocaille' of the eighteenth century from pictorial space to the three dimensionality of the viewer's space in stucco decorations.*<sup>35</sup>

It is here that Stella reintroduces ornamentation into painting through pattern and decoration. He recognized reductionism and painting's attempts to dispel illusionism as dead ends and instead sought more 'impure' methods utilising inclusiveness and alternative ways of incorporating past art traditions into his discourse about pictorial space. In this instance, he may also have provided an example for the next generation of painters to employ appropriation, as a source of larger consequence in their work.

Philip Taaffe's appropriation of works by Barnett Newman and Bridget Riley became prominent during the mid 1980s. His method was never ironic, it was instead a critical re-appraisal of modernist discourse and its systems. Taaffe remade, or re-enacted particular works in order to question modernism's sense of territory, i.e. ownership of a style,

<sup>34</sup> Marcus Bruderlin, op.cit. 2001,p. 192.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 192.

...and turn it into something that can be explicitly built upon, rather than it being untouchable artistic property.<sup>36</sup>



6. Philip Taaffe *Asterias* 1997

It is Taaffe's appropriation of eastern iconography, however, which reveals a position of relevance to this project. His 'redeployment' of arabesque Islamic patterns and decorations also bears resemblance to Stella's incorporation of the arabesque in his *Exotic Birds*. By appropriating material from non-western sources and repositioning it in ways synonymous to some of the more recognised modernist painters, Taaffe was able to offer a critique on systems of cultural value and exclusivity. He presented existing imagery in ways which revealed painting's potential for dialogue beyond its own borders and

...by 1991 he had found one of the secret passageways between art and ornamentation, and his paintings became crescendos of taut, balanced, elegant original beauty.<sup>37</sup>

This discourse (or Taaffe's emphasis on making work about discourse) is evident in a comparison between *Old Cairo* (1989) by Taaffe and *Number 10* (1950) by Mark Rothko.<sup>38</sup> Rothko's status in the hierarchy of modern painting is unchallenged; he is a champion of form's ability

<sup>36</sup> Phillip Taaffe, *Philip Taaffe: Composite Nature, a Conversation With Stan Brackhage*, Peter Blum Edition, New York, 1997, p. 86.

<sup>37</sup> Jerry Saltz, 'Pattern and Dissipation,' *The Village Voice*, June 22, 1999, vol. 44, iss. 24, p. 159.

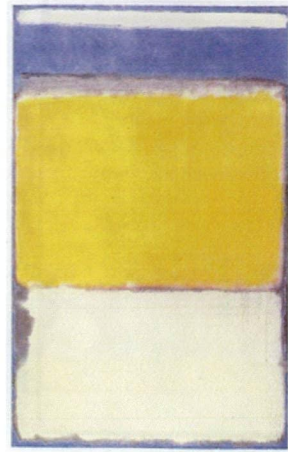
<sup>38</sup> Taaffe's discourse with modernism's absolutes is also evident in many other works, over a lengthy period. Of significance is his borrowing of Pollock's all-over composition in order to depict a variety of different motifs/creatures in ways more suggestive of their place in some type of natural order. He is able to reveal inter-connections between objects and their place in the universe by presenting them in structural systems previously seen as being exclusive to pure abstraction. For example see *Asterias* (1997).



to reveal inner experience. His moody, atmospheric colour fields are absorbing and contemplative. *Number 10* (1950) is a 'typical' Rothko, his characteristic horizontals, framed in portrait format are present, and a limited palette implies immersive landscape experience. One peers far beyond the surface, there is no space for the decorative or trivial, this is the apotheosis of 1950s Greenbergian modernist painting.



7. Philip Taaffe *Old Cairo* 1989



8. Mark Rothko *Number 10* 1950

Taaffe's *Old Cairo* (1989) offers a fresh perspective on the form/decoration dichotomy. In it he replicates Rothko's compositional strategy, incorporating similar horizontal, rectangular bands on a rectangular stretcher in portrait format. Taaffe's horizontals however, are not vacant fields, instead he has inserted gaseous slabs of decoration 'relating to a district of Cairo that contains both Coptic and Jewish remains.'<sup>39</sup> The surface is atmospheric and inconsistent, alluding to the passing of time, or archaeological circumstances. In this work Taaffe initiates a powerful comparison between religious bans, or restrictions on images, and modernist absolutism. He positions the form/decoration dichotomy as a type of *iconoclasm*. By presenting decoration in this manner, Taaffe invites integration, as pattern and decoration are positioned in order to reveal a potential to signify inner workings and structures. One of the absolutes of high modernism, the association of decoration with triviality and the absence of meaningful content is 'discontinued.'<sup>40</sup>

Taaffe's work during the past fifteen years, and especially more recently, 'borrows' less imagery from established decorative conventions and moves towards representing more accessible subjects such as animals, reptiles, fish,

<sup>39</sup> Bruderlin op.cit. p. 82.

<sup>40</sup> Enrique Juncosa, Robert Rosenblum, Robert Creeley, *Philip Taaffe*, IVAM Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, Valencia, 2000, p. 30.

plants, crustaceans, insects and diatoms; subjects not previously associated with decoration. This imagery has provided a significant context for this project. He places them in a picture in ways which open new links and interpretations between the subject and grander structural and phenomenological associations. For example in *Interzonal Leaves* (1998), translucent autumn leaves of varying size and shape stand to attention as if magnetised. Their skeletal structure reveals the system of their internal creation, and contrasts this fractal geometry against more figurative or proportional structures, as evident in their suspension. Behind, on a pale ground, are a variety of constructed decorative motifs in darker hues. These motifs do not float in suspension like the leaves, instead they arrange themselves in ways more suggestive of constructed, or man-made patterns. They are locked in a state of repulsion and attraction, or counter change, a system of order more evident in design rather than nature.



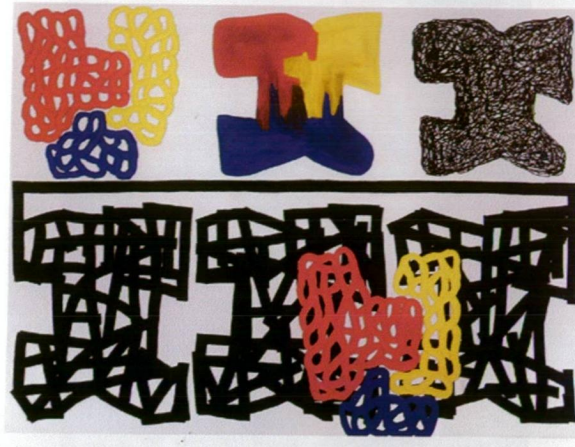
9. Philip Taaffe *Interzonal Leaves* 1998

Taaffe dismantles the opposition between abstraction and figuration. He presents leaves out of their usual context. Graphic strategies unlock an object's potential to function, or signify on numerous wavelengths, often opening interpretations which cross over into alternate genres. The initial character of the object is not dissolved, rather its representation offers linkages not otherwise perceivable. Taaffe does not merely replicate his motifs, as they become transformed into a much larger, often grander, 'unique' image.

Jonathan Lasker's works imply figure/ground relationships, and hence operate in a mode somewhere between figuration and abstraction. His 'figures' appear as knotted forms, frequently repeating themselves, not in imitation but in ways suggestive of altered states, or perceptual differences.



For example in *Interpretative Painting* (1994), a geometrical motif is multiplied in order to emphasise relational difference, i.e. the motif is the same but also transformable. Its repetitions are more like doppelgangers, or siblings. Meaning is sought through comparison. This is like a type of internalised serialisation.



10. Jonathan Lasker *Interpretative Painting* 1994

Lasker's paintings are rich with discourse about issues from the history of painting. His figure/ground compositions temper an unlikely connection between gestural and mechanical processes. This is a fluctuating state, as gestural mark making, usually likened to figuration is also often employed to describe a ground. A similar counter-logic is evident in mechanistic mark making, as this is more often associated with a ground, but frequently shifts to the figurative. Shapes that appear to be quite different often reveal a bizarre interconnection.

Lasker's paintings are not expressionist, or hard-edged; instead they convey a type of quirky lyricism. They are not automatic in procedure, as he completes preliminary drawings and even painted studies, or 'maquettes' prior to undertaking each work. Consequently, pre-determination offers a fresh perspective on spontaneity<sup>41</sup> and its position in modern painting.

<sup>41</sup> Spontaneity and immediacy in relation to process (brushstrokes and gesture) are shallow substitutes for 'freedom' and 'self expression.' The notion that a painter could reveal some kind of inner truth or 'natural force' by engaging in 'automatism' and 'immediacy' is a tired narrative. The self, as Lasker demonstrates can be expressed in more complex methods. Automatism was itself a dogmatic strategy, and it is inappropriate for those who still practice this methodology's exclusiveness to refer to alternative strategies as formularized, rigid or tight. The 'myth' of spontaneity in painting, is all too often employed unreasonably in order to make value judgments.



*Because human consciousness can conceive repetitive principles of organization, that doesn't refute the existence of free will or make such principles inevitable. That's what free will brings us, the option to control our actions and be morally responsible.*<sup>42</sup>

Lasker's works, therefore reveal a type of *frozen spontaneity*.<sup>43</sup> His process is clearly visible, '*what you see is what you see*.'<sup>44</sup> Unlike Hunter, Stella and Taaffe, he does not employ serialisation between separate works. Whilst being characteristic of his unique technical methodology, each work is very different.

Metaphor is also evident in Lasker's paintings; interpretation however, is less discernable as is the case with some of Taaffe's more descriptive compositions. Lasker's imagery is more independent, or more purely abstract, but meaning is important as he uses abstract forms to represent ideological systems, or philosophical positions. For example, in *Rural Geometry* (1998), he invites a dialogue about nature, intelligence and geometry.



11. Jonathan Lasker *Rural Geometry* 1998

In this painting four vertical rectangles integrate a flat green ground. The rectangles, de-lined by heavy black lines, are split down the middle by diagonal stripes on the left and vertical stripes on the right, these are suggestive of ploughed fields etc. The space between the rectangles is filled with free-form black lines, thinner in comparison, and hence receding; signifying that what appears as

<sup>42</sup> David Ryan, 'Visible Thoughts: An Interview With Jonathan Lasker', *Art Papers (USA)*, v.25, no.5, Sept-Oct, 2001, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> Hans-Michael Herzog, *Jonathan Lasker: Paintings 1977-1997*, Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 1997.

<sup>44</sup> William Rubin, *Frank Stella 1970-1987*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1987, p. 14.

uncontrollable in nature is indirectly formed by its relation to constructed geometry. In the middle ground a yellow upright vertical rectangle is integrated, and penetrated by the free-form lines. In the foreground are two white rectangles containing intersecting white, red and blue stripes, consequently forming crosses (no religious iconography here). These rectangles seem to float independently, maybe being reflective of human consciousness, or intelligence.

*Visually, it evidences how intelligence quests for an organization of principal human gesture that seeks its definitions in sequencing, patterning, repetition, and ultimate organization to yield the maximal harvest. The non-geometrical world of nature will inevitably be tailored to the rules and dictates demanded by intelligence's quest for the 'super form' ...*<sup>45</sup>

*Rural Geometry* is thus an apt title. Titles are important to Lasker, as they seem to connect the work to specified meanings. He keeps a list of titles and pairs them with works only when they are finished. Some are whimsical most, however, refer to philosophical conundrums or issues within painting. Without them, one senses, the work would lose its context, its inquisitiveness and even much of its content. Meaning also remains slightly elusive, as soon as one 'reading' is attempted, another evolves. As objects, Lasker's paintings are difficult to decode, they endure, and continue to intrigue.

## **PART TWO: EXHIBITIONS**

During the 1970s Jonathan Lasker was able to discover ways for painting to progress beyond the monochrome. Like Stella, he was able to incorporate pattern and decoration and external referents in his work at a time when it was 'forbidden.' He was influenced by the 'Pattern and Decoration' movement in the U.S.A.<sup>46</sup> The 'fleeting' occurrence of 'Pattern and Decoration' is documented in the book *Ornamentalism* by Robert Jensen and Patricia Conway.<sup>47</sup> In hindsight, artists such as Robert Kushner,

<sup>45</sup> Rainer Crone, and David Moos, *Jonathan Lasker: Telling the Tales of Painting. About Abstraction at the End of the Millennium*, Edition Cantz, Stuttgart, 1993.

<sup>46</sup> David Ryan, op.cit. , 2001,p.29.

<sup>47</sup> Pattern and decoration in this project is quite distinct from the pattern and decoration movement as described in *Ornamentalism*. That movement sought to subvert the hegemony previously established by modernist abstract painting. It proposed an alternative tradition grounded in domestic practices utilizing techniques such as

Kim MacConnel, Joyce Kozloff, and Valerie Jaudon provided an important intermediary during a period when formalism went underground.



12. Kim MacConnel *Mixed Media Installation View* 1980

What the pattern and decoration movement may have offered, in this instance, was in fact a lifeline, or a revelation that painting's endgame was only the conclusion of one particularly dominant narrative.<sup>48</sup> In fact it may have paved the way for a more inclusive model. Pattern and decoration in the context of this project does not seek to politicise or subvert, but rather to explore ways in which modernist abstract painting can be perceived as continuous.<sup>49</sup>

quilting and embroidery (thread rather than paint). See Robert Jensen and Patricia Conway, 1982, *Ornamentalism, the New Decorativeness in Architecture and Design*, Clarkson N. Potter Inc, New York, 1982, p. 240

<sup>48</sup> The work of London painter Stephen Buckley is worthy of mention here. During the 1970's he made paintings that incorporated pattern and decoration as devices for the 'formalist' continuation of painting. He was not associated with pattern and decoration in the U.S.A and his work was always 'accepted' in 'high brow' painting culture.

<sup>49</sup> There are several more important points of difference between this project and 1970s P&D as described in *Ornamentalism*. In a contemporary context its reactionary status has become somewhat less significant, for it is now widely acknowledged that Greenbergian/formalist modernism was only one narrative amongst many. Decoration, as pointed out by Donald Kuspit, in *Clement Greenberg: Art Critic*, University of Wisconsin Press, U.S.A, 1979 and Marcus Bruderlin, *Ornament and Abstraction*, Yale University Press, London, 2001, was present all along. It was not just a feminist domain, it was taken up by men also and is perceived now as a logical consequence of abstraction. In a post-modern context it is also loaded with content.





13. Stephen Buckley *D'Arizona* 1985

*Ornamentalism* made no terminological distinction between ornament and decoration, unlike an exhibition of the same title at The Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane during 1997.



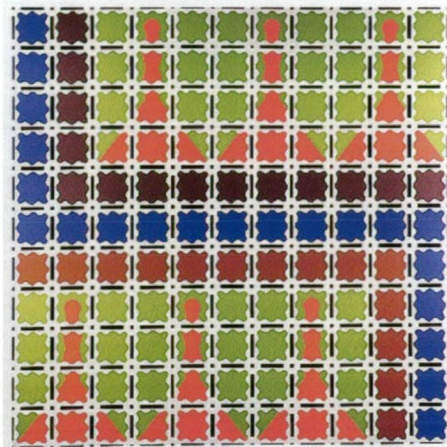
14. Bruce Reynolds *Yearning Thesis* (undated)

This exhibition 'elevated' ornament above decoration, despite similar dictionary definitions, in order to disassociate it from the stigma aligned to decoration. Curiously, it seemed to fulfill the aims of 1970s pattern and decoration as there was no doubt that the work presented assumed an important place in mainstream contemporary art. The catalogue offered a number of informative essays, all motivated by a reinterpretation of ornamentation in contemporary art.

Keith Broadfoot's discussion of Robert Rooney's *Kind Hearted Kitchen Garden* (1968), exhibited in *The Field*, is revealing of a type of antipodean sensibility. Broadfoot 'reappraises' Rooney's work in hindsight, with a prophetic vision as he states

...it is as though Rooney's work was a kind of postmodernism before postmodernism. There is in his work more critical astuteness and humour than any of the overexposed and overvalued American 'simulationist' or Neo Geo artists.<sup>50</sup>

Broadfoot disputes Rooney's place in a *high modernist moment in Australian abstract painting - a moment of sophisticated internationalism*<sup>51</sup> implying that this association does not justify the complexities in his work. Rooney's work *Kind Hearted Kitchen Garden* (1968) is rich in significance for this project. Even its title implies a place for decoration in the domestic, a circumstance beyond autonomy, indicative of Rooney's awareness of the work's discourse about painting.



15. Robert Rooney *Kind Hearted Kitchen Garden* 4 1968

The catalogue for the exhibition *Ornament and Abstraction* has also provided a substantial context for this project. The exhibition it accompanied presented a number of different propositions that challenged modernism's exclusion of ornamentation and decoration by placing abstract art in a continuum that was synonymous with the development of ornament throughout the history of art and across different cultures. Marcus Bruderlin,<sup>52</sup> the curator, employed the services of a variety of different writers to support the exhibition of a vast array of works, mostly two-dimensional, in order to reveal an epic survey of ornament emphasizing its influence and contribution to the genesis and development of abstraction. The impact of that catalogue on this project has been substantial, as it has provided a detailed background and opened up a discourse

<sup>50</sup> Andrew McNamara, op.cit. 1997, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> Marcus Bruderlin curated the exhibition 'Ornament and Abstraction' during 2001 for the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel.



much larger and wider-reaching than initially expected. Therefore some of its key propositions provide insightful templates which aid in shaping a context for the work.

Bruderlin, like McNamara (*Ornamentalism* 1997), does not blur the terms ornament and decoration. He also differentiates between them to separate ornament from decoration and its superfluous connotations as he claims ornament must be ‘freed’ of its decorative associations.<sup>53</sup> This position, I would conclude is purely terminological; it does not alter modernism’s position in relation to decoration. A different term may imply a new solution but the condition still remains; ornament, and hence decoration are perceived differently by painters now than during the modernist period.

There are many different models that attempt to explain how modernism, or abstraction came to be. The most accepted being the reductive model; that abstraction resulted from a process of the gradual deletion of recognizable subjects until only pure form remained. Cezanne is considered an ‘instigator’ of this model, hence he is often referred to as the ‘father’ of abstract art. The reductive model is responsible for the form/decoration dichotomy. Bruderlin offers an alternative based on the lineage of the ornamental. He suggests that modernism evolved alongside the ornamental. His model proposed that abstraction was part of a long tradition of ornamentation, and was therefore not reactionary, but rather part of a continuum. Instead of Cezanne, he implies an origin for abstraction in the curvilinear wallpaper motifs of the Art Nouveau exponent Henry Van de Velde in 1889,



16. Henry van de Velde *Wallpaper* 1895

<sup>53</sup> Marcus Bruderlin, op.cit. p. 11.

and in the abstract reliefs of Frantisek Kupka displayed in the Secessionist exhibition in Vienna in 1900.<sup>54</sup>

Bruderlin also identifies ornamentation in important modernist developments. He states that ornamentation was a 'stowaway' throughout the modernist period. For example, during 1910 when Kandinsky is said to have 'discovered' abstraction by accidentally placing a painting upside down, and perceiving it as a new work, (a process which he later termed 'axial rotation') was in fact reflective of basic decoration strategies like inversion, or counter change. He further sites the presence of ornament as a 'subculture' within the history of modernism. He even links Stella's expansive reliefs which went beyond the boundaries of the stretcher to Philip Otto Runge's decorative etchings of 1803, in which floral motifs penetrate the borders of the picture and continue into the frame.<sup>55</sup>

*Ornament and Abstraction* is an inclusive exhibition, it expands *Ornamentalism's* (1982), celebration of non-western art as a source of relevance and importance. Bruderlin's referencing of the ornamental is so expansive, that he proposes a convincing argument for its evidence in all forms of visual art. He makes strategic links between figure/ground, all over compositions (unity and repetition) and processes of ornamentation. His recognition of the ornamental is especially pertinent for abstraction as is cited in his *ABSTRACT PAINTING - AVANT GARDE = ORNAMENT* logic.<sup>56</sup> In this equation, he simply implies that once abstract painting is disassociated from the avant-garde, it becomes ornamental, due to a loss of political weight.

Helmut Federle's painting *Asian Sign* 1980, as discussed by Bruderlin, identifies the inclusive potential for abstract painting to offer signifiers external to painting. The work reveals a dual reading; on one hand it presents a taboo sign, the yellow swastika, and on the other it presents an internalized 'Hoffmannesque' modernist abstract composition. I succumbed to the latter reading, only acknowledging its dual code upon reading Bruderlin's description. This work is a strong example of the breakdown of modernism's autonomy, as images can also be incorporated into literal signs.<sup>57</sup> Ornament and

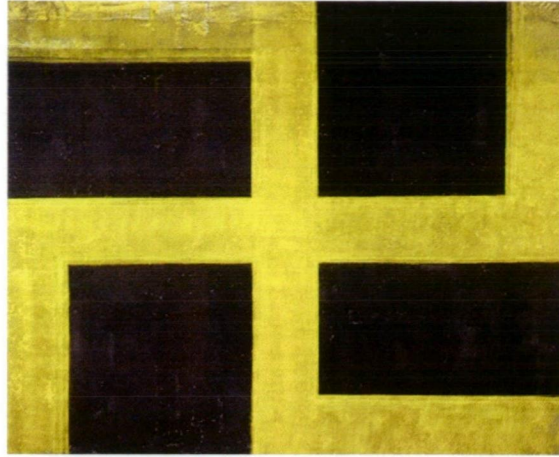
<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Ch. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 86.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 205.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 180.

Abstraction confirmed my enquiries as to a state of currency for abstract painting, and it also instigated a reassurance and validation of decoration in my own practice.



17. Helmut Federle *Asian Sign* 1980

The final two exhibitions I intend to mention do not involve a direct narrative concerning issues in painting pertinent to pattern and decoration. Instead they promote a persistence in painting which emphasizes the sensory and the perceptual. *Post-Hypnotic* was an exhibition curated by the University Galleries from the Illinois State University in 1999.<sup>58</sup> The works in the show indicated a persistence of abstract painting which emphasized the optical, usually through the manipulation and presentation of pattern, as distinct from decoration. In one of the catalogue essays, Barry Blinderman identified an optical continuum within modernism that bore some resemblance to Bruderlin's previously mentioned model outlining the 'stowaway;' ornament. What is pertinent to this show however, is Blinderman's description of a condition called 'synesthesia' which he uses to explain the levitating, vibratory spatial appearance in many of the works. 'Synesthesia' seems to initiate a space between the work and the viewer, as elements in it appear to hover. He places it in a contemporary context by establishing connections to retinal art and 'screen' technology. He also proposes 'experiential' painting to be a more current development in painting than simulationism.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Good Vibrations*, curated by Zara Stanhope, for the Heide Museum of Modern Art, 2002, in Melbourne offered an antipodean perspective in comparison to *Post-Hypnotic*. It was more concerned with an Op Art 'legacy' in Australia, and hence lacked the contemporary relevance that seems to be evident in *Post-Hypnotic*.

<sup>59</sup> Barry Blinderman and Tom Moody, *Post-Hypnotic*, University Galleries of Illinois State University, 1999, pp. 4-9.

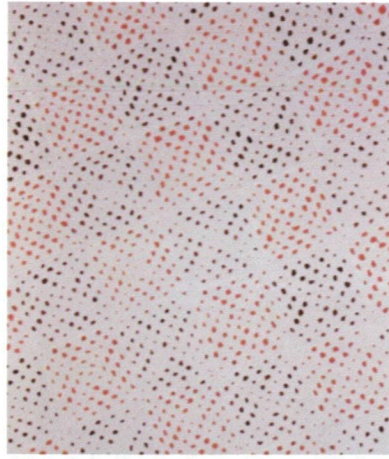




18. Karin Davie *Over* 1998

A mechanized paint surface proliferates in *Post-hypnotic*, and it implies this is more indicative of the contemporary situation. However there is one exception; the claustrophobic roller coaster stripe paintings of Karen Davie. Davie's paintings, even in the catalogue, initiate sensations not far removed from motion sickness, and like most successful perceptual abstraction appear almost kinetic. She reveals the order in which stripes were painted through overlapping semi gestural lines. Drips connect to gravity, and reveal a way up. Her work functions retinally, whilst also recording the physical movements of the artist's hand, yet she still values the mark-making capacity of the brush (unlike, Hunter, Taaffe, and Lasker). These are powerful paintings, but one wonders about their long-term sustenance, what future direction will proceed from them without appearing reactionary? Davies' work bears few direct resemblances to my own<sup>60</sup>, but there are qualities worth noting. Her contortion of the arabesque in positions that move beyond the ornamental and into the physical (a difficult quality to maintain given post-modernism's deletion of the artist and self-expression) remains fresh and even seems to transcend the architectural. An intriguing conglomeration of Op, and Abstract Expressionism is present.

<sup>60</sup> There are many other artists whose work bears greater resemblance to my submission such as Mark Dagely and Michelle Grabner, but I am drawn to Davie's brushstrokes and physicality.



19. Michelle Grabner *Fuzzy Blkt#4* 1998

Physicality through mark making is also a concern for many of the artists included in the exhibition *Abstract Painting Once Removed* curated by Dana Friis-Hansen for the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston during 1999. This exhibition presents painting by a younger generation of artists, most of whom began practicing in the 1980s. Given their 'infancy' these artists were too young

*...to have forged any steadfast ideological aversion to painting theories of the nineteen fifties and sixties (and) might also be able to contribute new interpretations of now archival material.*<sup>61</sup>

It offers a fresh perspective on contemporary painting and illustrates its continuation beyond the dominant modernist modes of spiritualism, expressionism and formalism. Evident also is a hybrid strategy, as artists incorporate contrasting styles like abstraction and representation. Inspiration is obtained from diverse source material such as sonar scans, bar codes, fax machine misfeeds and socially or culturally activated signage and iconography.<sup>62</sup>

There is a hint of the prophetic in catalogue essays by David Pagel and Peter Schjeldahl, both of whom attack an academic establishment still holding to 1970s anti-aesthetic conceptualism. Their model for art history is cyclical, suggestive of a 'changing of the guard,' a return of abstract painting in the form of a 're-invigorated cyborg' type manifestation; a procedure which appears to me reminiscent of Steve Austin's reincarnation as *The Six*

<sup>61</sup> Dana Friis-Hansen, *Abstract Painting Once Removed*, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, 1999, p.19. As quoted from a catalogue essay by Michael Darling for the exhibition *Monique Prieto at ACME*, 1996.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 20.



*Million Dollar Man!* Will painting reappear better than it once was? Didn't this already happen with 1980s figuration? Pagel's criterion for this is painting's removal from geographical exclusiveness, postmodern irony and self-expression.<sup>63</sup> Whilst Schjeldahl predicts the rise of *abstraction 2* approximately a century after its genesis.<sup>64</sup>

This is bold material and the exhibited work is similar in intent to my project. It distinguishes methods for the continuation of painting well beyond modernism by mixing and critiquing its rules. Beatriz Milhazes is an artist who combines pattern and decoration in order to create a blend of culturally loaded signage with the discourse of modernism. One is reminded of Taafe's motif re-contextualizing and of course pattern and decoration. Milhazes' technique is interesting and may even be reminiscent of folk art practices, as she first paints her motifs onto plastic and then transfers them to the painting as though making a collage.

*Applied over a pre-painted background, the superimposed colours, patterns and motifs build gradually to form an elegant collage-like surface in which each element maintains it's discrete identity and handmade quality...there is indeed the sense of her paintings as displaying the contents of a keepsake drawer, filled with pieces of antique lace, swatches of old wallpaper, ribbons and embroidery.*<sup>65</sup>



20. Beatriz Milhazes *O Buda* 2000

This project is motivated by other art. Its creation is informed by recent developments in abstract painting. Its

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> Barry Schwabsky, *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting*, Phaidon Press Inc, New York, 2002, p. 218.

source material is vast and diverse. After *The Field* exhibition in Australia many of the artists did not persist with abstract painting, and for a while it may have appeared too problematic. There have also been those, like Robert Hunter, who have persisted.<sup>66</sup> The 'old' rules no longer apply, consequently a period of unashamed lyricism and freedom to include has eventuated in much recent abstract painting. Painting which still delights in image and process as matters of priority, but is also able to function metaphorically between different codes of meaning. Post-modernism's emphasis on interpretation and the viewer, rather than the self-expression of the artist, offers a degree of liberation for the contemporary painter. Without the old hierarchies, a certain release may also be achieved through a lack of orthodoxy.

<sup>66</sup> Brice Marden, Stephen Buckley and Sean Scully are three significant international examples.

## CHAPTER THREE: HOW THE PROJECT WAS PURSUED

### INTRODUCTION

Sometime during the mid 1990s a significant shift in the structural elements within my painting became apparent. A move away from cubist grid structures towards those more akin to cartesian or proportional supports began to emerge. This change is significant because the cubist grid at its inception was a stylistic triumph of modernism. It facilitated the early modernist abstract dialogue, as its peculiar visual characteristics appeared to elevate painting to an autonomous position in union with influential discoveries in other disciplines. Its emphasis on relational internal workings, overlapping, and dynamism, facilitated a claustrophobia that seemed to challenge conventional notions of pictorial space and how the world was perceived phenomenologically.

With the expulsion of the cubist grid format from my painting, the resulting structures took on a more expansive potential. No longer reacting to or resisting the internal boundaries of the stretcher, compositions were easily continued beyond the front of the work and onto the side. Consequently each work was painted on a wide stretcher enabling it to protrude or appear to inhabit *'the same order of space as our bodies,'* and hence engage with literal space.



21. Burnie Studio 2000

*From Giotto to Courbet, the painters first task had been to hollow out an illusion of 3 dimensional space on a flat surface. One looked through this surface as through a proscenium onto a stage. The picture has now become an entity belonging to the same order of space as our bodies, it is no longer the vehicle of an imagined equivalent of that*



*order. Pictorial space has lost its inside and become all outside. The spectator can no longer escape into it from the space in which he himself stands.*<sup>67</sup>

Significantly, during this period I had re-established a connection with more recent international dialogues about painting and became even more aware of the conundrums it faced. Of particular concern was the realisation that, given the recognition of the painting as object, an additional transformation had eventuated. No longer painting flat, but in relief, meant that I was indulging in something different, something removed from previous strategies and in fact more akin to 'decorating.' The two parts, namely the object and the painting of it, appeared quite separate. Applying hessian to the stretcher seemed to provide an intermediary between what was painted and the object, it made the patterns which I applied to it (by squeezing paint through a cake decorating plunger) appear more integrated with the surface.



22. *Untitled Variant Series* 2001

'Object' paintings also overcame painting's problem with its own authenticity, or in this case its illusionism.<sup>68</sup> These works were 'real' because they were 'there'. I began this project in this frame of mind, engaging in the problems of painting. At that stage I had made sculptural painting for three years, and my anti-illusionistic stance for validating painting was itself in need of re-evaluation. I had to recognize that there were some problematic qualities in my work. Namely, painting's illusionistic condition, and the

<sup>67</sup> Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1961, p. 136-7.

<sup>68</sup> Reductive strategies in painting during the late 1950s in the U.S.A. sought to define painting by eliminating everything it was not. Greenberg 'advocated' flatness as a characteristic common only to painting, hence illusion was perceived as 'impure' and subsequently 'extinguished' from painting.

absurdity evident in order to attempt to 'purify' one's work by the elimination or exclusion of qualities considered illusionistic.<sup>69</sup> Why then make object, box structures to paint on when the sides can simply be incorporated onto the front of the picture plane? Hence my first problem became evident. A shaped canvas, namely a cube, provided both plan and elevation, on the one two dimensional plane, and therefore an appropriate illusionistic format within which to work.

The general procedure I have followed in order to make the work for this project is straightforward in terms of painting procedure. Substantial preparatory studies were completed prior to each major work. A4 or A3 studies were pursued initially, larger works on paper followed, often to scale, and oil paintings were completed last. Works were always completed in series. In this chapter I will provide a nine point chronological summary of how the work was pursued. These points will outline the formation of the work. It often evolved through its own internal logic; that is, 'continuation' was aspired to through the critical re-assessment of ideological and technical positions. Some insights into this procedure are also revealed in this chapter.

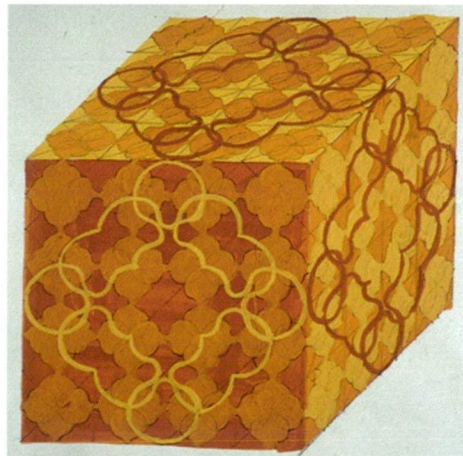
## **1. PICTURES OF CORNERS (July 2001)**

Completing preparatory studies had proved to be beneficial in my practice for some time, although previously this method had undergone several adaptations before it assumed a vital role. In the early nineties, my strategy was vastly different. Any drawing undertaken was not preliminary, but rather occurred simultaneously throughout the development of the major work. Everything was evident in the final painting, its developmental history was underneath its layers, and could be 'excavated' by scraping back paint. At one point I even considered the physical weight of each work as a factor for the recognition of its completion due to the actual paint build up in it. Images were deliberately awkward and 'over cooked.' An odd mix of expressionism

<sup>69</sup> Frank Stella's attempts to expel illusionism from his painting in works like *Getty Tomb* (1959) were noted with interest. His attempt to link the linear components of the image to physicality by painting stripes the same width as the stretcher bar made sense. The whole painting narrative about illusionism (and truth/purity) actually contributed to its endgame. It was almost scientific in aim and execution. Who is to tell what is 'real' anyway? Even science can fail us here. Art can only offer interpretations, all of which inherently employ illusion. Stella still 'struggles' with issues of perception, even in his recent work; however he was able to find ways to continue beyond the endgame.

and constructivism was present. It was a type of reactionary anti-painting. This approach, of course, became problematic, so the rules had to change, besides, I had nowhere to store all the work! Works on paper were introduced, and consequently substituted for all the layers which had been painted over in the oil paintings. For some time my practice had deliberately resisted the standard methodology of planning artworks. I was testing the boundaries of process, but this tactic was probably contradictory to my own obsessive expectation to paint almost daily.

*Pictures of corners* are small studies in gouache on A3 paper, almost all of which are in orange. Composition, or the positioning of shapes and lines, is always my first priority when undertaking a new body of work. Orange, therefore had no special significance, it was just leftover from a previous series of works on paper. My aim was to devise a way to move beyond the previous work. The shaped canvas, or cube format seemed to reveal both the sides and front, it was after all, like viewing my previous box paintings at a 45 degree angle. It was an illusionistic format. This was in fact an axonometric cube, that is, *the vertical and horizontal axes are drawn to scale but the curves and diagonals appear distorted*.<sup>70</sup>



23. *Axonometric Cube Study* 2001

Since the mid nineties, all the images in my paintings have been composed of variations of the same motif; a double curved line. This line, like every element in my painting, initially developed from past work. Its origins are purely concrete; it was not derived from phenomena external to painting. It came about as a reaction to the corners of the

<sup>70</sup> Encarta® World English Dictionary © 1999 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Developed for Microsoft by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.



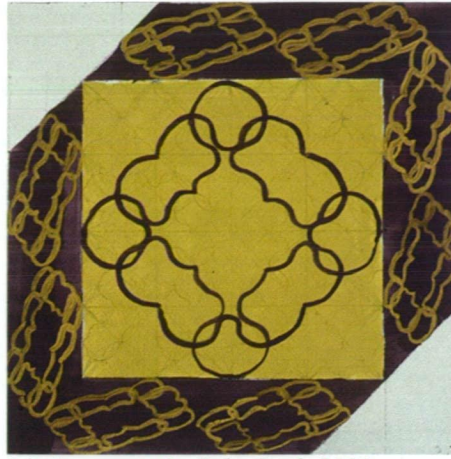
rectangular painting support; a curve simply led the eye around the inside of the corner. It was manifested in painting's physicality and has provided a building block for new material ever since. Its associations are diverse, as it in fact became a type of 'arabesque' line. The arabesque, briefly, is a type of universal curve, appearing in motifs and designs across cultures for centuries<sup>71</sup>. Significantly it provides visual linkages between Eastern motifs, Art Nouveau, and Abstraction. The double curved line enabled me to produce images that were reductive, (or minimal), as they were made from one line, but was also decorative and patterned through the line's repetition and inversion. An interesting combination of two aspects of oppositional modernist ideology.

Images at this point were derived through a process of drawing, photocopying and painting. Photocopying, rather than digital imaging enabled a quick and effective construction of templates that formed the under structure, and outline of each study. Motifs were devised, and subsequently arranged by enlarging, shrinking, repeating and juxtaposing the double curved line using a cut and paste method. Counter change, or doubling, was an essential strategy as forms grew from inside themselves. They were multiplied according to their own image, a process akin to natural phenomena and occurrences like cell division and reflectivity. Evidence of photocopying was mostly painted over, but a residue remained around the borders of each study.

Most of the compositions I devised were deliberately central. I was trying to resist the temptation to present images as slightly skewed or off centre. Centrality is innately symmetrical, and both are important points of interest in this project. Symmetry is often perceived as in opposition to nature, and hence aligned more with culture, or intelligence. *'Symmetry is death. Nature forbids symmetry said Philip Taaffe.'*<sup>72</sup> My compositions often bear greater resemblance to constructed phenomena like signage and architecture rather than natural phenomena. Robert Hunter's paintings are almost always central and symmetrical. They signify a type of sublime constructivism, in their faint tonal variations of systemic structural order. His new work appears more cosmic and expansive; a type of 'equivalent' science fiction utopia.

<sup>71</sup> Marcus Bruderlin, op.cit. p. 11.

<sup>72</sup> Philip Taaffe, op.cit. 1998, p. 52.



24. *Axonometric Cube Study* 2001

Towards the end of this period, a single composition was selected and colour was added; three primaries plus purple. Four colours meant four paintings to make a series. Composition presented a motif devised by positioning the double curved line inside plan and elliptical squares. This formed a type of iconic cross. Colour was secondary, it enabled differentiation between works and segments within works, and its contribution was not equivalent to the other elements. This idea was not pursued.

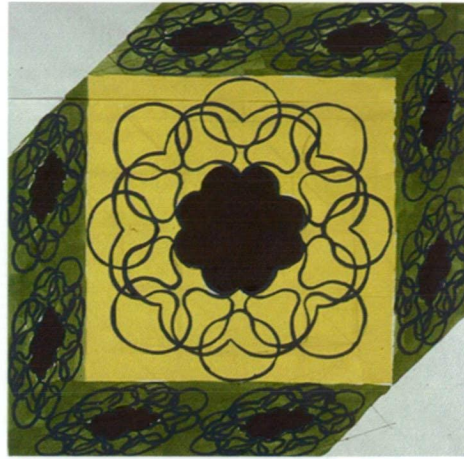
## 2. BIFORMATION (August 2001)

This period was also characterised by the completion of a series of studies in gouache on paper. I increased the size to two conjoined A3 sheets in order to facilitate greater painted detail. The two sheets were photocopied separately and subsequently taped together. The axonometric cube format remained.

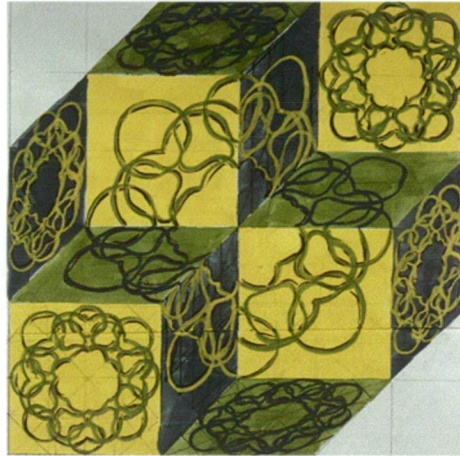
I had been experimenting with a grid substructure inside the cube. As a cube presents both a front and side I was able to fill it with a sequence of smaller cubes.<sup>73</sup> Placing the double curved line inside the obliqueness of the cube had proven contradictory and problematic. I found myself questioning this combination, as adding the ornate motifs onto the grid structure often appeared pointless. This action merely seemed to be filling space. It was only superficially decorative and therefore the two structures could not

<sup>73</sup> Victor Vasarely's *Planified Expansive-Regressive Structures* in *Kepler Cubes*, in *Axonometric Cubes*, and in the *Hexagon Pattern* (early 1970's) revealed a cold mathematical logic which I subsequently discovered after moving on from the axonometric cube format. He developed both internalized and expansive works based on the anamorphic space of the cube. See *Vasarely 3*, 1974, translated by, Haakon Chevalier, preface by Marcel Joray, Editions du Griffon, printed in Switzerland.

‘work’ in unison. Since the cube was also a square with two opposite corners cut off, I was never able to surround any internalised motif. The cube format always seemed to dominate. I had painted myself into a corner.



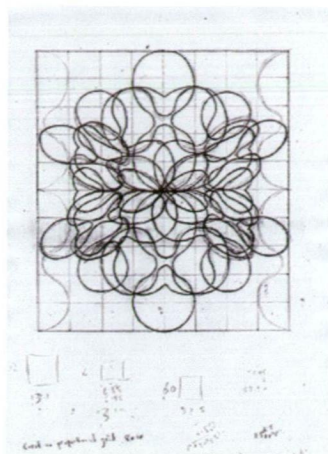
25. *Axonometric Cube Study* 2001



26. *Axonometric Cube Study* 2001

At this point I made a significant discovery. The juxtaposition of plan and elevation inside the cube facilitated the formation of a motif that displayed its own internalised structure, quite separate from the hard edges of the cube. It was of course achieved through biformation, or multiplication through repeating. This was a new motif, and I simply referred to it as a *crest*. It dominated its geometric substrate, and presented a more organic arrangement. I lifted it from its support. It presented an intriguing compositional solution, quite different from previous works. It was ornate. The cube format was no longer required. I had devised ‘something’ to paint.





27. *Crest Motif* 2001 (preliminary drawing)

### 3. THE UNTITLED *CREST* SERIES (August – September 2001)

During this period I completed more studies and a series of twelve works on paper. The crest motif resulted from a combination of techniques influenced by painting's discourse, visual strategies, and developments in my past work (or rather reactions against developments in my past work). During its genesis there was no emphasis on signification or metaphor, its conception was purely formal. Content was not the means of its creation. However, whilst its form was not compromised by semantics, inevitable comparisons to external referents emerged. Through the arrangement and relationship of the 'objects' in the composition of the crest, a particular phenomenological organization was present. Its curvilinear qualities evoked the arabesque, and its internalised sequencing and folding was indicative of a type of lotus form. With the removal of the grid substrate, distinctions between plan and elevation, or anamorphic space, dissolved. The crest was flat.

Studies focused on the presentation of the crest. Particular techniques could reveal its potential to function as figure, or ground. I endeavoured not to alter the form, instead concentrating on colour, tone and surface. Colour threatened to be a distraction, therefore a limited palette was used. Yellow was emphasised. Yellow played an important role in Impressionist colour strategy; it is what turned purple to grey/black (as black itself was not used because it did not appear in the colour spectrum). Being the colour of sunlight, it also had landscape references. A muted yellow palette invited the sublime, and enhanced

connections to a type of natural order.<sup>74</sup> It was added in varying proportions to all colours. Usually two adjacent colours were selected, and four tonal variations were mixed by adding colours complementary to those chosen.

The works on paper were completed in gouache on 300gsm university cartridge and measured 105cm high by 86cm wide. The proportion of the rectangular shape was devised according to the proportion evident in the crest. It was five parts high by four parts wide. A return to the standard rectangle seemed appropriate.<sup>75</sup> The crest was tightly contained within it and its edges made contact with each side of the rectangle. This claustrophobia was reminiscent of the cubist grid. Whilst the works were not presented as objects, the crest still emphasised physicality, by the contact it made with the borders of the paper.



28. *Untitled Crest No.3 2001*



29. *Untitled Crest No. 6 2001*

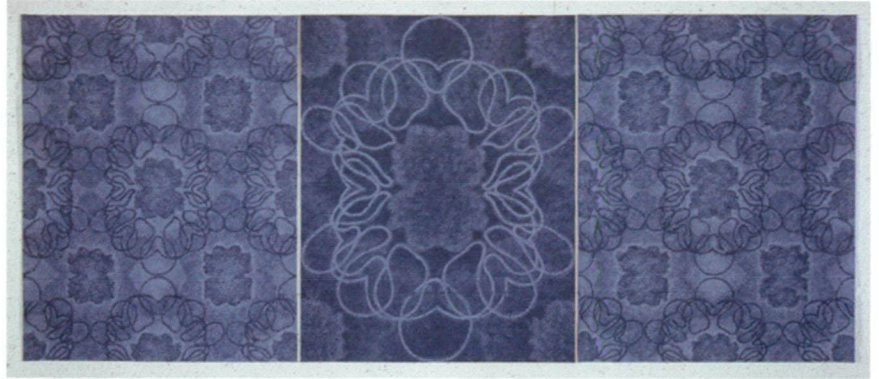
Individual works on paper were undertaken after the completion of studies; which were similar in size and technique to the 'pictures of corners,' until some departure from the previous image was achieved. A coloured ground was first applied and the crest drawn onto it in freehand with chalk. Gouache was carefully painted in layers by stippling using a stubby brush. Colours were allocated to parts of the crest in order to re-present it and emphasise further potential for variety and difference. While I attempted not to alter the form, it was re-presented in differing guises and states.

<sup>74</sup> For a revealing discussion on Mondrian's 'factual' use of colour see Jonathan Lasker, 'Piet Mondrian: Soft Squares', *Artforum*, October, 1995, p. 93.

<sup>75</sup> The discourse of the shaped canvas appeared pointless at this stage, because once hung in a gallery works are contained inside the rectangular shape of a wall anyway. Where are the boundaries of a picture?



*Untitled Crest Triptych*, a three-panelled work was completed in November 2001. It was the final piece in this series. It juxtaposed micro and macro representations of the crest. Through repetition the crest's function shifted from the figurative, or ornamental, to the decorative and patterned. Constellations, and stylistic connections to Art Nouveau and Baroque interior décor became more evident.



30. *Untitled Crest Triptych* 2001

#### **4. CREST MANIFESTATIONS (October – November 2001)**

During this time, a substantial period of investigation was undertaken into the manipulation of the crest to reveal a greater variety of compositional possibilities. Colour was again reduced (to a dull blue) and the relation between works was investigated more intensely. If they were to function as a series what, other than decorative operations, was to be expressed? In some instances the proportional grid behind the crest was revealed. I was struggling against a temptation to peel away the ornamentation. In portrait format, a divisional horizon line, across the centre, emphasised figure/ground relationships.



31. *Crest Study* 2001

## 5. CREST SERIALISATION (December 2001 – January 2002)

During this period, four large works on paper were completed. Each work was 172cm high by 122cm wide and executed in a technique similar to that described in the *Untitled Crest Series 2001*. These works were all in portrait format, split by a central horizon and brighter in colour. Previously, I had resolved to present lines in ways that created decorative arrangements, or systems of structure and organization that extended the vocabulary of abstract painting. Reductive strategies were followed, in order to adorn and decorate rather than delete or reduce.



32. *Untitled Crest No.3 2001*



33. *Untitled Crest No.4 2001*

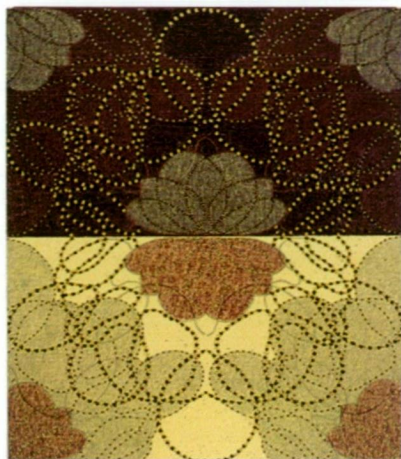
Colour had become secondary; how could it be more active? In response I increased the intensity of each colour and reduced the total number of colours to six for the entire series. My intention was to demonstrate how the sequencing, or order of colours, could change the appearance of the final hue. This strategy was grounded in Monet's (or Manet's) 'broken colour' technique and Seurat's 'simultaneous contrast.' Colour, the most subjective element in my work, would be presented as a logical sequence.

## 6. THE PLUMATE SERIES (January – March 2002)

At this stage of my research, I completed a series of eight oil paintings. These were exhibited at La Trobe Street Gallery in Melbourne during May. The exhibition was titled *Plumage*, and I referred to the works as *The Plumate Series*. The title directly raised the 'issue' of decoration, or the realisation of 'art for arts sake' as decoration and its potential to signify meaning by presenting open structures. It could be construed as self-deprecating labelling, or even



derogatory. I considered it indicative of the critical procedures within my painting, and evidence also of an aesthetic transformation. There was also an indirect reference to Frank Stella's *Exotic Birds*.



34. *Constructed Lotus* 2002

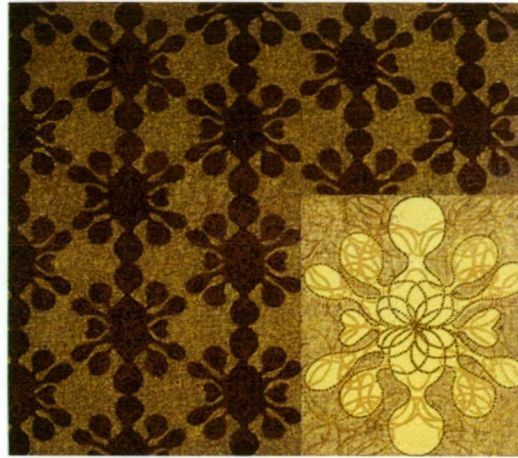
Each painting was 120 by 105 cm, four in landscape, and four in portrait format, all painted in oil on hessian stretched over a plywood support. Eight colours in total were used, four on each work. When hung in the correct order each painting revealed two colours from the previous painting and the remaining two colours continued into the next work. In each work colours were arranged in a tonal hierarchy (dark to light and vice versa), constituting cool and warm versions of the three primaries and purple (violet and mauve). Yellow was still a point of emphasis as in earlier works. Colours were also muted, but only slightly, retaining a degree of acidic intensity.

Underneath each image was evidence of a structure, or network, also derived from the crest. This was screen printed onto a coloured ground. Shapes were then filled with colour and finally lines were highlighted by squeezing paint through a cake-icing bag. Hessian was a difficult surface to paint on because its gridded surface competed with marks made by the brush. Four prototypes (to scale) were initially made in order to decide how paint was to be applied. It was therefore 'placed' mechanistically on the surface of the hessian, enabling the coloured ground to permeate. Dots integrated lines to the spaces in the grid made by the hessian.

This method of paint application was consistent with my past oil paintings. It made connections with phenomena external to painting such as neon signage, architectural reliefs, and activities not usually technically associated with

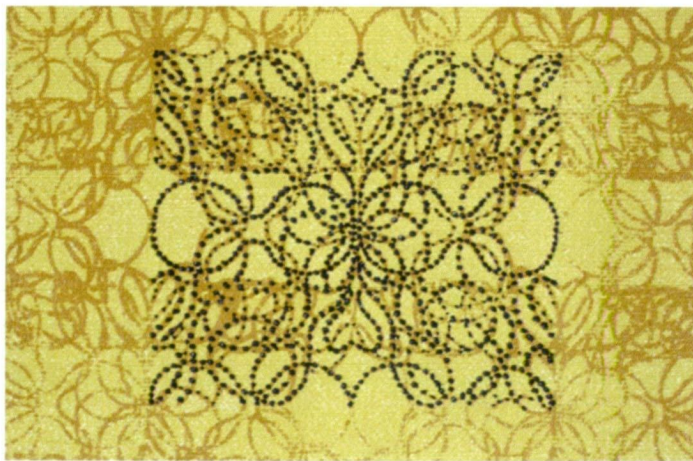


painting, such as cake decorating and even embroidery. These connections were facilitated through the application of paint. Paint itself began to take on the appearance of objects, even confectionary, through the manipulation of its own form. This process was no different to the illusionistic metamorphosis painters had employed for centuries. Another modernist impurity, as paint did not look like paint.



35. *Sequence* 2002

These were not easy works to ‘digest,’ as symmetry, centrality and claustrophobia were again points of emphasis. Their visual intensity was confronting, they were aesthetically challenging paintings that did not sit comfortably beside one another. They were critiques of themselves. Space was unusual, and depth was shallow. A ‘plasticised’ figure/ground relationship was present. Subject matter was non-representational, and detached from external appearances.



36. *Tessellated Network* (detail) 2002

There seemed to be a ‘logic’ apparent in this series. The viewer could contrast works with each other in order to

recognise oppositions and sequences. I had intended, as in *The Untitled Crest Series*, to employ only a minimal range of compositional difference between each work. Instead I succumbed to variety, painting in some cases very different interpretations of the crest. A proportional logic was also evident. I reduced the size variants of the crest to three, that is, the larger crest was twice the size of the middle crest and the smallest, which also became a network, was half the size of the latter. The whole series functioned within a number of absolute fixed rules. These absolute rules, rather than appearance, determined the outcome of each image.

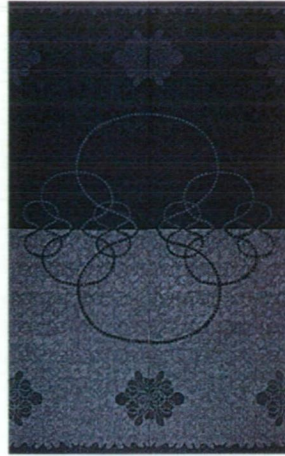
## **7. EXPANDED COMPOSITIONS (May-August 2002)**

After a period of reflection, a transformation in the work came about. This was a reaction to the 'problems' of *The Plumate Series*. I began to explore more expansive interpretations of the crest motif, especially its arrangement as a network. Interpreting the network facilitated more intensely patterned imagery. The figure/ground characteristic was juxtaposed with organizations similar to fields. Grounds became more active and integrated, consequently hessian was no longer required. The new images were less claustrophobic and colour was reduced to variations of grey by mixing red, blue and yellow. Metallic colours, especially silver, as a source of reflectivity, were considered.

During this period I completed another body of preparatory studies and four large works on paper. The works on paper were more classical in their composition, often demonstrating an hierarchic structure. Centrality was still a vital ingredient, but it was less claustrophobic, and more hypnotic, or kaleidoscopic. With the network being more visible, these new works emphasised selection and interpretation alongside image creation. There was more scope for the viewer to also participate in this process as large portions of the network were visible as a delicate embossing.

Each work on paper incorporated a screen-printed network into a coloured ground. Unlike earlier screen-printed networks which were linear, this one was comprised of repeated interlocking crest motifs made entirely from dots. Larger images were also screen printed onto this combination of network and ground and over-painted using stippling. Works were constructed in sections, enabling each screen to be registered by aligning the edge of the paper to the stencil. Registration was slightly offset. The

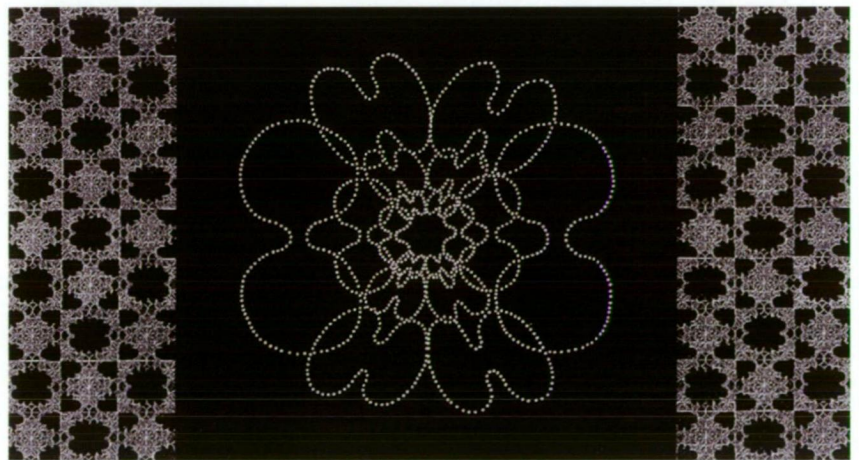
hand of the artist was still present.



37. *Untitled Vertical* 2002

## 8. PHOTOCOPIED DRAWINGS (August - October 2002)

At this stage of my research, it became pointless to continue to hand colour each photocopied study. I completed a series of drawings made almost entirely using a photocopier. The logical procedures I was struggling with in previous works became simplified due to the technical limitations of the photocopier. It was a device well suited to reductive strategy.



38. *Study for Matrix* 2002

I was able to break the three-part proportional absolute of previous works. If the studies no longer had to be hand coloured, I could utilize proportion as a strategy of far greater contrast by increasing miniaturisation. This breakthrough amplified the mechanical aesthetic in the images, as detail went beyond what was achievable by hand. Intensified networks began to buzz, as its transformation revealed additional visual interpretations. A



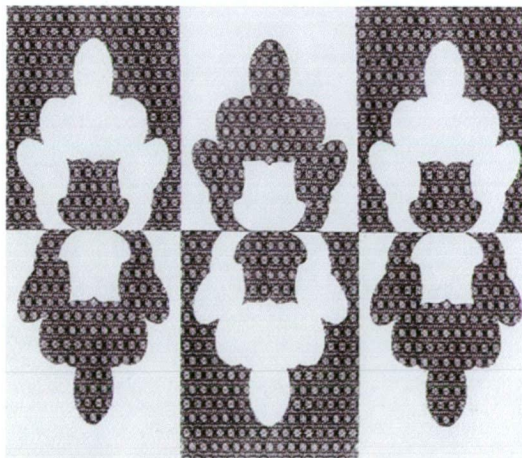
spatial 'synesthesia' became evident. Progress had been made.

I completed a series of twelve images. These were enlarged. As the size was increased, imperfections in the printing process became apparent as the images contained large quantities of black. These works would remain small.

Photocopying facilitated selection. Its functions were a simulation of the techniques I had previously performed manually. It was useful in extending my imagery, but other techniques were required if I was to engage more directly with the conventions of painting.

#### **9. THE SYNESTHESIA SERIES (November 2002 - February 2003)**

Four images were selected from the photocopied drawings. Although different compositions were selected, there were clear points of reference between them. This was a tighter selection in comparison with *The Plumate Series*. The crest motif was presented in four different manifestations. In *Untitled Veil*, it functioned as a type of portal, or an overlying structure, or covering which influenced and shaped things around it. One looked at it, and through it. In *Untitled Continuum*, the crest became part of an endless vertical band. Figure and ground were unified, but also distinct, with due differences in scale. In *Equilibrium*, it was multiplied and dissipated into a patterned network, or field. In, *Untitled Construction* it became a panorama.



39. *Study for Untitled Continuum* 2002

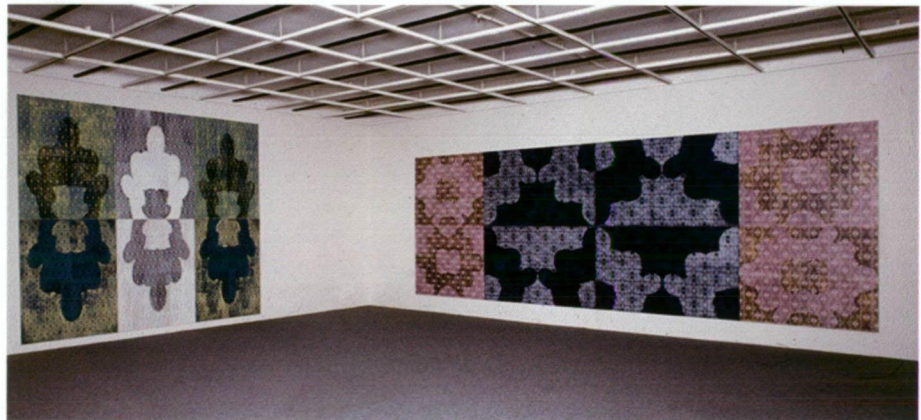
A different type of representation became evident in this series. The crest was more effectively functioning as a signifier for organisational and rhythmic gestalts external to its internal workings (in contrast to *The Plumate Series*).



These compositions became diagrams for hypothetical structural systems.

How would I paint these images? The photocopied drawings had made plain a more sensory, or retinal field through miniaturization. Alternating the viewing distance enabled two different readings of the network. It seemed to change. The crest motif could be identified with close inspection, however as one moved away from the work it was replaced by more intense vibratory patterning. New forms emerged, as parts of the crest with less detail appeared to portrude. In order to maximize this optical 'effect' I resolved to make the works very large.

A mural-sized scale enabled the works to function as environments because each painting enveloped the viewer. At a shallow viewing distance, one became immersed, as shapes were lost to tiny dots and lines. The macro became micro, consequently form transformed into decoration. By increasing scale it became possible to present the same motif as both trivial and monumental.<sup>76</sup> This is a point of closure to the discourse concerning the modernist form/decoration dichotomy.



40. *The Synesthesia Series* (detail) 2003

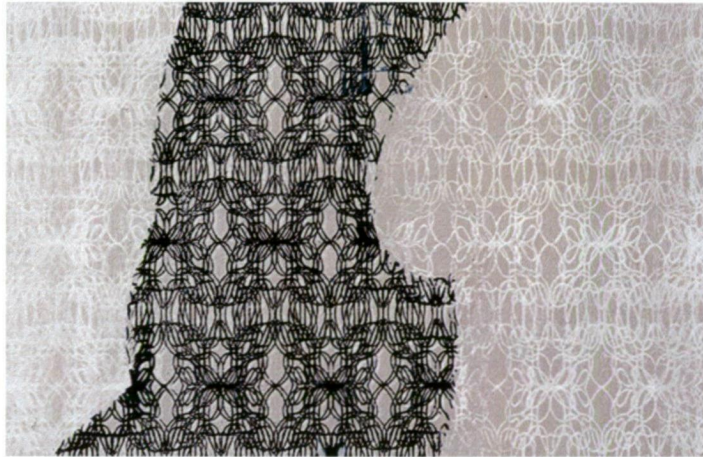
Repeating the same motif also facilitated unification. Although parts of a composition could function differently, i.e., as figure or ground, each element was always connected by sameness. Motif repetition not only created a 'field' of smaller patterns (ground), but also enabled larger forms (figures) to function in a relational capacity. These two

<sup>76</sup> There is a correlation here to a proposition by Clement Greenberg. He offered a 'solution' to the problem of decoration in painting. Simply by increasing the scale of works, any elements which were once trivial, could be transformed into the monumental. He cites the paintings of Matisse as worthy examples of this method. See Donald Kuspit, *Clement Greenberg, Art Critic*, University of Wisconsin Press, U.S.A., 1979, p. 63.

qualities, namely fields (e.g. Rothko) and relational compositions (e.g. Mondrian) were perceived as separate, bipolar entities during modernism.



41. *Untitled Continuum* 2003



42. *Untitled Continuum* (detail) 2003

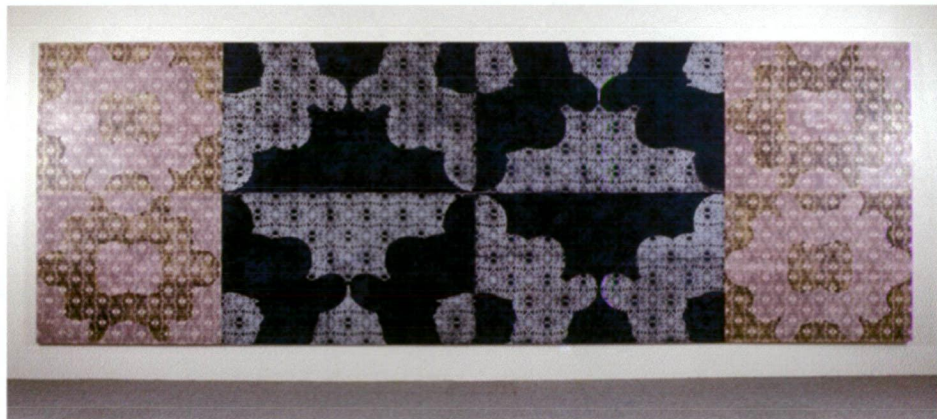
I constructed a number of photocopied stencils. Their size was determined by the size of the silkscreen mesh and the actual work. I used the same registration method as described previously to make the works on paper. They depicted the crest network in lines and dots. *Untitled Continuum* and *Untitled Construction* were made using one stencil each, and *Untitled Veil* and *Equilibrium* using two each. Stencils were transferred onto silkscreen mesh using light-sensitive chemicals. This process required extensive preparation.

How would paint be applied? During the construction of *The Plumate Series*, the potential for screen-printing to function as painting became evident. Philip Taaffe's exhibition *Composite Nature* also provided a method for



painting through a screen.<sup>77</sup> In the exhibition catalogue Taaffe described his method. He applied a wash with a brush onto the stencil first, enabling the paint to bleed through it, leaving a type of ghosting. Paint was thickened, and colours altered for subsequent layers. An image was built up using linear or pixilated alterations of itself.

A number of colour studies on photocopies were completed. I attempted to achieve unity and balance between equal combinations of cool and warm primary and secondary colours. A further series of colour studies representing sections of the final works to scale were completed in acrylic paint. Tonal contrast between hues was exaggerated, due to the size of the works. I resolved to complete *Untitled Veil* in violet and mauve (violet, being warm was highlighted with gold and mauve being cool was highlighted with silver), *Untitled Continuum* in cool blue/green and silver, *Equilibrium* in cool primaries and *Untitled Construction* in warm red, orange, yellow and gold. Metallic colours added an extra reflective layer. Yellow was still added as a base colour, to encourage unity, but not to the same extent as in previous works. Composition was absolute whilst colour remained the greatest variable. It added a subjective element, but could also imply indirect references to 'landscape' and the wider cosmos.



43. *Untitled Veil* 2003

Differentiating between painting and screen-printing was a consideration, and became another strategy to progress painting by engaging in 'discontinuity.' It highlighted the trivialities of medium specific disciplines. I did not consider these works to be printmaking, however I struggled to envisage a logic as to why not. There was a 'clumsiness' of paint application, somewhat reminiscent of

<sup>77</sup> Philip Taaffe, op.cit. 1997.

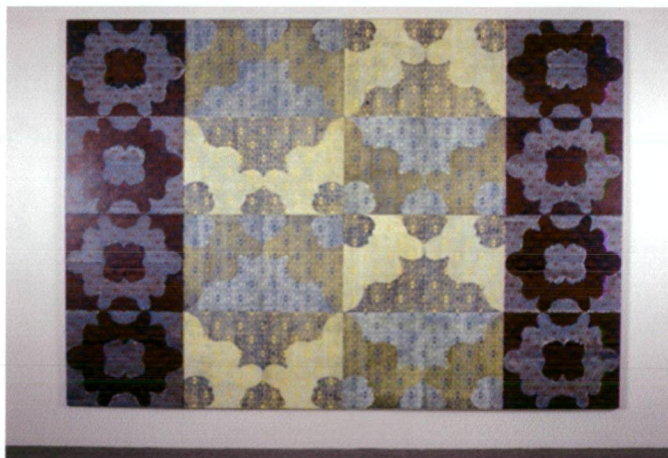
Warhol and Rauschenberg. This was the evidence of the hand.

*Paint bears physical record to the expressions of the human hand. It conforms to the trail of the brush being driven by impulses of the psyche. In no other art medium is creation more permanently and intimately bound to the movements of the human body. Nowhere is the human more empowered to have a direct and immediate effect on the image of his world.<sup>78</sup>*



44. *The Synesthesia Series* (detail) 2003

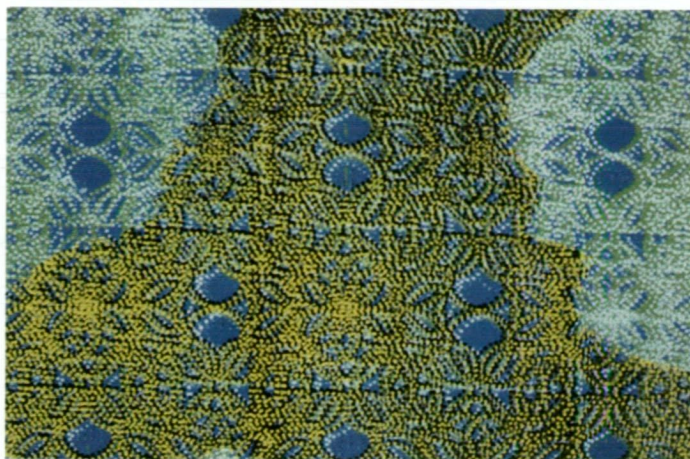
Prior to screenprinting I painted a coloured ground with a mop. The mop mark was intended to replicate the grounds I had achieved using a stippling brush in earlier works on paper. This procedure was largely inconsequential, as the ground often became difficult to discern beneath the screen printed surface.



45. *Equilibrium* 2003

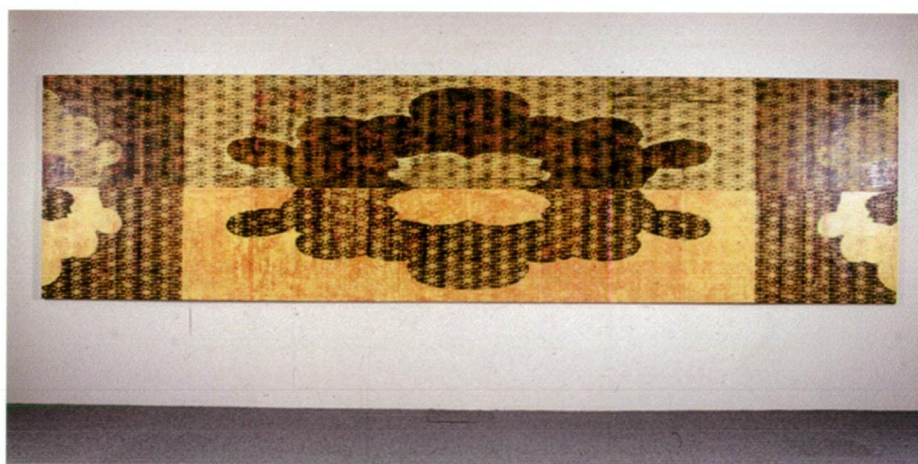
<sup>78</sup> Jonathan Lasker, *Complete Essays*, Edgewise Press Inc., New York, 1998, p. 40.





46. *Equilibrium* (detail) 2003

The consistency of the oil paint was crucial; being a sensitive material it was difficult to control. Like Taaffe, I applied the first layer by pushing paint through the screen with a brush. Subsequent layers were applied with a squeegee and registration was slightly offset to facilitate 'synesthesia.' Paper templates were used to form each image. These were silhouettes of the crest in various sizes and distortions. Decisions evolved during the process and risks were taken. Painting through a screen meant I could not directly see what I was doing. I feared failure, as nothing appeared to be working as I had intended. Different sized squeegees were also used to reveal evidence of the hand. This mechanized mark making connected to painting in a lithographic sense. The works required between four and seven screen printed layers.



47. *Untitled Construction* 2003

The four works were painted on a number of separate plywood panels, with pine backing. Twenty-nine panels were required. These were bolted together. The pine backing was left unpainted at the sides of each work. No painted corners were required as 'sides' were

incorporated into the design of each image. This is evident in the presence of margins. I perceived this as a point of resolution with the internal narrative of the axonometric cube.

I decided to title this final series of painting's *The Synesthesia Series*<sup>79</sup> (a term used by Barry Blinderman to describe the vibratory visual sensation in much of the work in the exhibition *Post-Hypnotic*<sup>80</sup>) Synesthesia is the point of resolution in the thesis. It has created an intensified visual sensation somewhat more indicative of screen space, rather than real space.

<sup>79</sup> Benjamin Frank Miller *Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health*, W.B. Saunders Co., U.S.A, 1992, p.1442, defines synesthesia as: a secondary sensation accompanying an actual perception; the experiencing of a sensation in one place due to stimulation applied to another place; also, the condition in which a stimulus of one sense is perceived as sensation of a different sense, as when a sound produces a sensation of colour.

<sup>80</sup> See the discussion concerning this exhibition in chapter two.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

A reinterpretation of pattern and decoration is necessary in order to interpret the function of all the work in this project. Reinterpretation is an appropriate term because pattern and decoration were always present in painting throughout the modernist period. This project is indicative of a personal recognition of these qualities and a desire to investigate their significance in painting. In this exegesis I have revealed the work's grounding in recent dialogues about painting and also some of the internal logic behind its own making. I do not however attempt to identify meaning, for fear of sounding prescriptive. Works are inspired by discourse, but do not function as narratives.

The works in *The Synesthesia Series* employ pattern and decoration in order to convey particular visual sensations. They are experiential works that engage the viewer perceptually. Whilst experiencing the work the viewer is also invited to reflect upon the many referents within it. The characteristics of these referents are determined by the viewer and the experiences they choose to draw upon in order to facilitate interpretation. Images are not symbolic, but may be metaphorical. There are rules for interpreting this work, but they are not absolute. Pattern and decoration function as open signifiers across multiple codes of interpretation. It is my intention that *The Synesthesia Series* operates somewhere between clarity and ambiguity.

Pattern and decoration provide a pictorial vehicle which conveys complex systems of structure and organization or, what could be described as methods for perceiving and understanding our relationship to the cosmos. The images in *The Synesthesia Series* are reminiscent of conditions like infinity and eternity, and I present these as visual constructions. Whilst they may appear to allude to the transcendental, it is intended that such a reading assume a diagrammatic quality.<sup>81</sup> The words infinity and eternity, descriptive of space and time, are used to describe conditions that are difficult to recognize in actuality. Painting in this way is representational of ideology which is considered abstract.

Scale amplifies sensation and makes one more aware of one's own body in relation to the work. One's figure may

<sup>81</sup> Despite some personal doubts about Peter Halley's conceptual position and it's relationship to his work (as expressed in chapter two) I agree with his general premise that technology has altered our perception of things and hence it must be addressed to some degree.

be substituted for the form of the crest, therefore inviting relationships between the body and its position inside a much grander macrostructure. Are we part of an expansive interconnectedness? Is our sense of self significant in this grander scheme?

*In some remote corner of the universe, poured out and glittering in innumerable solar systems, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowledge. That was the haughtiest and most mendacious minute in 'world history'- yet only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths the star grew cold, and the clever animals had to die.*<sup>82</sup>

The body is also drawn into kaleidoscopic spatial sensations through centric compositional arrangements. Centrality is hypnotic, suggesting the presence of a type of controlling mechanism. Kaleidoscopic space implies a vortex. The vortex in *The Synesthesia Series* is determined and mechanical, and it strives for control and rationalization through the logic of sequencing. However the vibratory sensation of 'synesthesia' is also disorientating. It questions the limitations of empiricism. How should one look? What should one look for? Scale also amplifies disorientation.

Symmetry is certified by centrality. This is traditionally associated with classical principles of order, balance and harmony, but beneath the equilibrium in *The Synesthesia Series* exists an anxiety. In this case centrality is an uncomfortable visual quality which may be indicative of an underlying catalyst for entropy. Rudolf Arnheim identified an '*ambivalent attitude towards formal perfection frequently met in scientists, artists and philosophers.*'<sup>83</sup> He cited a number of examples of positions which challenged popular associations of symmetry as equivalent to harmony. In fact, symmetry may invite a psychological paralysis, as Arnheim described Buridan's ass as a

*strictly philosophical ass who found himself symmetrically placed between two identical bundles of hay but who, since*

<sup>82</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in an Extra Moral Sense*, 1873. As quoted by Rainer Croner and David Moos in *Jonathan Lasker: Telling the Tales of Painting. About Abstraction at the End of the Milenium*, Edition Cantz, Stuttgart, 1993, p. 20-21.

<sup>83</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, 'Symmetry and the Organization of Form: A Review Article,' *Leonardo*, Vol. 21, No.3, 1988 pp. 273-276.



*he could see no reason for going to one rather than the other, starved to death.*<sup>84</sup>

In this work, symmetry and centrality are also indicative of systems of psychological control.

Pattern and decoration defy their normal 'superficial' functions in *The Synesthesia Series*. It provides information exchange through sensory experience. It presents itself as meaningful. Its manifestations originate within art history and are subsequently formed through an internalized process of logic and rule making. The rules are made to be broken, but not ridiculed, instead they are superseded by 'newer' models, hence purity and autonomy make way for inclusion and referentiality.

*There is something ridiculous and miserly in the myth we inherit from abstract art... That painting is autonomous, pure and for itself, and therefore we habitually defined its ingredients and define its limits. But painting is 'impure.' It is the adjustment of impurities which forces painting's continuity.*<sup>85</sup>

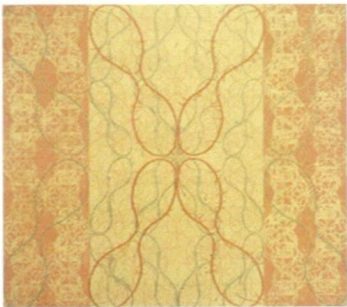
In this project painting strives to present a particular type of space which can be experienced. A space evident more in technology or culture, as opposed to nature. Synesthesia is of course evident in screen technology, it is what provides space and movement in television. Is this effect deceitful? Are contemporary artists interested in facts or fiction? Painting provides a way of interpreting what it is like to be alive now in ways that it has never done before. Pattern and decoration, for the moment, provide a vehicle to make paintings about contemporary structures and the ways that they may be perceived. Somewhere along the way universal truth became unachievable, abstraction became style; but the journey towards it became more interesting. My work strives to find another place for painting, an old technology amongst 'new' ones.

<sup>84</sup> Alan L. Mackay, 'Generalised Crystallography,' part 1, p. 166, as quoted by Rodolf Arnheim, in 'Symmetry and the Organization of Form: A Review Article,' *Leonardo*, Vol. 21, No.3, 1988 p. 275.

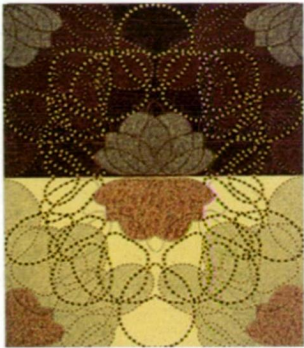
<sup>85</sup> H. H. Arnason, *Philip Guston*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1962, p. 20.

**APPENDIX 1: THE PLUMATE SERIES 2002**

All works are 120 x 90cm, oil on hessian/ply.



*1. Immersion/Repulsion*



*2. Constructed Lotus*



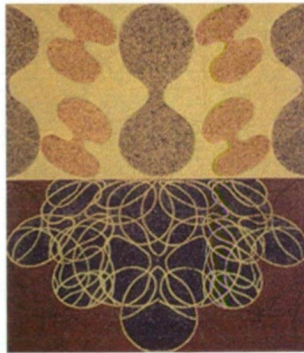
*3. Sequence*



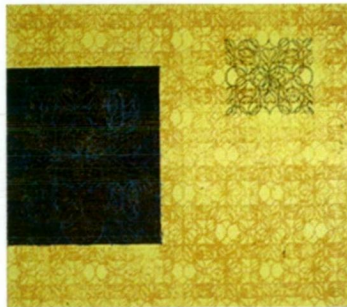
*4. Alternating Crest*



*5. Inverted Symmetry*



*6. Plumage*



*7. Tessellated Network*



*8. Multiple Orientation*

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### APPENDIX 3: LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Shirley Kaneda, *The Assurance of Doubt*, 1995, oil and acrylic on linen, 190x157.5cm
2. Peter Halley, *Superbundle*, 2000, acrylic pearlescent and metallic acrylic and roll-a-tex on canvas, 274.3 x 299.7cm
3. Robert Hunter, *Untitled #4*, 1990, acrylic on plywood, 122x244cm
4. Robert Hunter, *Untitled (#2)*, 2001, acrylic on plywood, 122x244cm
5. Frank Stella, *Steller's Albatross 5x*, 1976, mixed media on aluminium, 304.8x419.1cm
6. Philip Taaffe, *Asterias*, 1997, mixed media on canvas, 149 x 192cm
7. Philip Taaffe, *Old Cairo*, 1989, monoprint, acrylic on linen, 231 x 172cm
8. Mark Rothko, *Number 10*, 1950, oil on canvas, 229.5x145cm
9. Philip Taaffe, *Interzonal Leaves*, 1998, mixed media on linen, 203 x 231cm
10. Jonathan Lasker, *Interpretative Painting*, 1994, 191 x 254cm
11. Jonathan Lasker, *Rural Geometry*, 1988
12. Kim MacConnel, Holly Sollomon Gallery Show, 1980 mixed media installation view
13. Stephen Buckley, *D'Arizona*, 1985, oil on canvas and insulation board on two panels, 228.5 x 305 x 15cm
14. Bruce Reynolds, *Yearning Thesis*, lino on wood panel, (undated) 183x123cm
15. Robert Rooney, *Kind Hearted Kitchen Garden 4*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 168 x 168cm
16. Henry van de Velde, *Wallpaper*, 1895

17. Helmut Federle, *Asian Sign*, 1980, dispersion paint on canvas, 234 x 288cm
18. Karen Davie, *Over*, 1998, oil on canvas, 72x60 inches
19. Michelle Grabner, *Fuzzy Blkt #4*, 1998, enamel and flockmedex, 28x24 inches
20. Beatriz Milhazes, *O Buda*, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 75.5 x 71 inches
21. Burnie studio 2000
22. *Untitled Variant Series*, 2001, installation view, Carnegie Gallery, oil on hessian/ply, 135 x 90cm, four units
23. *Axometric Cube Study*, 2001, gouache on paper, 24 x 24cm
24. *Axometric Cube Study*, 2001, gouache on paper, 24 x 24cm
25. *Axometric Cube Study*, 2001, gouache on paper, 36 x 36cm
26. *Axometric Cube Study*, 2001, gouache on paper, 36 x 36cm
27. *Crest Motif*, 2001, graphite on paper, A3
28. *Untitled Crest No.3*, 2001, gouache on paper, 105 x 86cm
29. *Untitled Crest No.6*, 2001, gouache on paper, 105 x 86cm
30. *Untitled Crest Triptych*, 2001, gouache on paper, 105 x 258cm
31. *Crest Study*, 2001, gouache on paper, 22.5 x 24.5cm
32. *Untitled Crest No.3*, 2002, gouache on paper, 122 x 150cm
33. *Untitled Crest No.4*, 2002, gouache on paper, 122 x 150cm
34. *Constructed Lotus*, 2002, oil on hessian/ply, 120 x 105cm



35. *Sequence*, 2002, oil on hessian/ply, 120 x 105cm.<sup>36</sup>
36. *Tesselated Network* (detail), 2002, oil on hessian/ply, 120 x 105cm
37. *Untitled Vertical*, 2002, gouache on paper, 244 x 172cm
38. *Study for Matrix*, 2002, photocopy, A4
39. *Study for Untitled Continuum*, 2002, photocopy, A3
40. *The Synesthesia Series*, 2003, installation view, *Untitled Continuum* and *Untitled Veil*, Plimsoll Gallery
41. *Untitled Continuum*, 2003, oil on ply, 340 x 300cm
42. *Untitled Continuum*, 2003, (detail)
43. *Untitled Veil*, 2003, oil on ply, 238 x 695cm
44. *The Synesthesia Series*, 2003, installation view, *Equilibrium* and *Untitled Construction*, Plimsoll Gallery
45. *Equilibrium*, 2003, oil on ply, 280 x 406cm
46. *Equilibrium*, 2003, (detail)
47. *Untitled Construction*, 2003, oil on ply, 180 x 690cm

## APPENDIX 4: CURRICULUM VITAE

1968 Born in Wynyard, Tasmania

### EDUCATION

1991 *Graduate Diploma in Art and Design*  
Phillip Institute of Technology, Melbourne  
1990 *Diploma of Teaching*  
University of Tasmania, Launceston  
1989 *Bachelor of Arts in Visual Art*  
Tasmanian State Institute of Technology,  
Launceston

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2003 *Equilibrium*, Poimena Gallery, Launceston  
2002 *Plumage*, La Trobe Street Gallery,  
Melbourne  
2000 *Trance*, La Trobe Street Gallery, Melbourne  
1999 *Panoramic Paintings*, Hellyer College  
Artspace, Burnie  
1997 *Excavations and Mind Moments*, Burnie  
Regional Art Gallery, Burnie  
*Internalised Structures*, Newstead College  
Gallery, Launceston  
1996 *Physical Abstraction*, Queen Victoria  
Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston  
*Craftworks*, Hellyer College Artspace,  
Burnie  
1994 *Subjective Spaces*, Hellyer College  
Artspace, Burnie  
1989 *Paintings by David Hawley*, Cockatoo  
Gallery, Launceston

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2002 *Pattern as Subject*, Contemporary Art  
Services Tasmania, Hobart  
*Half Way There, Recent works by current  
postgraduate students at the University of  
Tasmania School of Art*, Plimsoll Gallery,  
Hobart  
*Microcosm*, University of Tasmania, Burnie  
Carnegie Gallery, Hobart  
Burnie Regional Art Gallery  
*Food in Art*, Devonport Regional Art  
Gallery, Devonport

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 2000/2 | <i>The Hutchins Prize For Works on Paper,</i><br>The Long Gallery, Hobart  |
| 1998   | <i>Burnie Painters,</i> The Long Gallery, Hobart<br><i>G4, Painters in Progress,</i> University of<br>Tasmania, Burnie |
| 1995   | <i>In a Practical Sense,</i> (a C.A.S.T emerging<br>curators exhibition)<br>The Long Gallery, Hobart                   |

#### GRANTS, AWARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2001 | Australian Postgraduate Award  |
| 2001 | Painting Commission, Humanities Building,<br>University of Tasmania, Launceston  |
| 2000 | Burnie City Council Financial Assistance<br>Grant<br>Arts Tasmania Project Grant |
| 1997 | Royal Sun Alliance Award for Highly<br>Commended, Trust Bank Art Award           |
| 1996 | Arts Tasmania Project Grant  |

#### COLLECTIONS

Artbank  
Newstead College  
University of Tasmania, Launceston  
Wynyard High School  
Burnie Regional Art Gallery

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